



“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

What It’s about	2
It may Be a Sensitive Topic	3
Common Questions.....	4
Week 1	5
Preparation	5
Be sure and bring pen & paper for group members.....	5
Opening Thoughts to the Group	6
Discussion.....	7
Activity Time	7
Action Steps.....	8
Closing.....	8
Week 2	9
Preparation	9
Discussion.....	9
Action Steps.....	9
Closing.....	9
After you’ve served	10
Examples of clear action steps for week 1	11
Serving Starter Ideas.....	12

WHAT IT'S ABOUT

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.

IT MAY BE A SENSITIVE TOPIC

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.

COMMON 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, you can. In fact, we will need several hundred of you to sign up for pre-planned activities. Space is limited so sign-up quickly for those activities.

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

WEEK 1

The purpose of week 1 is to:

- 1) Identify opportunities for your group to serve during the winter “Love Starts Here” group serving alignment (Nov/Dec 2015).
- 2) Define clear action steps. For example, who will make the initial contact and offer to help. Or, if your idea is simple (and doesn’t require permission) you may want to just coordinate how and when to do it.
- 3) Be prepared next week to share updates on potential serving opportunities and make a final decision on whom you will serve, what you will do, and when you will do it.

Preparation

Be sure and bring pen & paper for group members.

Pray for your group, that their hearts will be open to serving and that lives will be changed.

Read page 3, “It May be a Sensitive Topic.” This section in particular will help you prepare for a tension that may surface in your group.

There is a list of service starter ideas on page 12 if you need a nudge of creativity.

When deciding how to serve, keep these things in mind:

- ▶ When serving individuals or families it is far more helpful to offer something specific, instead of asking, “What can we do for you?”
- ▶ “What can we do for you?” is more appropriate for nonprofits because they often have a harder time employing specific talents and experiences.
- ▶ Your first service idea may not work out like you intended, so it’s best to have a back up plan.

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.

Opening Thoughts to the Group

Our opportunity today is to create our own service project. We'll talk a little about our experiences serving others and our expectations for serving together. We'll also do an exercise that will help us figure out whom we can serve. Serving together as a group can help Faith Promise in our journey to become the kind of compassionate and giving church that unchurched people want to come check out. If we follow through with this as a group, we'll help our church provide more service projects for those who are not connected in groups. Also, we will help be the change in our church culture, living with an outward focus as we experience life with a new perspective and joy.

Before we dive in, here are a couple of simple thoughts that will help guide our conversation:

- ▶ Ideally, we will find a service opportunity that we can do together.
- ▶ We can all serve someone.
- ▶ The most helpful service opportunities are the ones that are most dignifying to those whom you are serving.

Discussion

1. Share about a time when you served someone else.
2. Imagine if everyone at our church served. What kinds of things could we accomplish collectively in our local communities?
3. What is an obstacle you face in giving your time to serve others?
4. What can this group do to help you remove or overcome that obstacle?
5. Think about your abilities, skills, talents, resources, experience, and temperament. What do you have to offer others in service? Be as specific as possible.

Activity Time

Write down the responses to the following questions (preferably where everyone can see).

- What are the names of widows whom you know?
- What are the names of single-parent families whom you know?
- Who do you know who is struggling with unemployment?
- Who do you know who is struggling financially?
- Who do you know who is suffering a loss?
- Who are the people new to your neighborhood? What are their names?
- What are some nonprofits that you know about and like?
- Is there a pre-planned project (Angel Tree, KARM, etc) that we feel called to?
- What are the names of other people or families you know that are hurting or struggling, for reasons we haven't talked about?

Action Steps

Review the list with your group. Remind one another that you can serve someone. Spend the rest of the group meeting deciding whom you will serve and the steps you will take.

- ▶ Begin with the people, families, or nonprofits that may allow you to serve together. Be creative.
- ▶ Discuss how you might use the skills, resources, experience, etc., that you listed earlier.

Before the end of your group time, you should define these action steps. See examples on page 11.

- ▶ Who will contact the person, family, or nonprofit?
- ▶ When?
- ▶ What will you offer to give or do?

Closing

Next week, be prepared to share updates on potential serving opportunities and make final decision on whom you will serve, what you will do, and when you will do it.

WEEK 2

The purpose of week 2 is to determine next steps and an action plan.

Preparation

If nothing else seems to work, you can sign up for a pre-planned service project at <http://faithpromise.com/missions> under the “Love Starts Here” section.

Discussion

Have group members share updates on potential service opportunities into which they were looking.

Action Steps

Make final decision on your service project.

- ▶ Whom will you serve?
- ▶ What will you do?
- ▶ When will you do it?
- ▶ Assign someone to post at www.faithpromise.org/missions and share when/where you served after it occurs.
- ▶ Pray. Commit your efforts to the Lord and ask for his guidance, courage, and persistence.

Closing

In closing, communicate this to your group... It's always easier to talk about serving than to actually serve. I hope this discussion was a step toward action. Whether or not we follow through is up to us. Let's encourage each other and hold each other accountable. We can always contact the church missions office or groups office at missions@faithpromise.org or by calling 865-251-2590.

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.

EXAMPLES OF CLEAR ACTION STEPS FOR WEEK 1

Example A:

The Davis family next door is going through a difficult season of life.

- ▶ Mark is going to call the Davis family this week to let them know that our small group would like to serve them if we could.
- ▶ Tell them we'd like to make some meals for them, ask them if they have any food allergies or if there are specific foods they don't like, and set a date or dates to deliver the food.
- ▶ Ask if the group can come by Saturday to do some fall/winter yard work.
- ▶ See if they have any specific things they would like done. Are they looking for anything in particular (furniture, jobs, or a church)? If so, use your networks to help them.

Example B:

Mrs. Roberts is an elderly lady that Kathy sees walking in the neighborhood. Kathy knows Mrs. Roberts is a widow and often alone.

- ▶ Invite Mrs. Roberts to an upcoming holiday meal or a party with the group.
- ▶ Ask her if she would like to join some of the ladies in the group for a manicure... on us.
- ▶ See if the group can come by next Saturday to tackle some projects around the house (painting, cleaning, yard work, just social time, etc.)

SERVING STARTER IDEAS

- Surprise your neighbors and invite them to dinner.
- Cheer up a sick friend with a visit or a meal.
- Collect unused make-up, perfume and other cosmetics for a center for abused women.
- Volunteer to clean up trash at a community event or local park.
- Rake leaves, shovel snow, clean gutters or wash windows for a senior citizen.
- Deliver meals to individuals who are homebound.
- Send letters to those serving overseas.
- Organize a board game night at your local nursing home.
- Make “no-sew” fleece blankets for your local children’s hospital
- Donate gently used board games and decks of cards to a local homeless shelter.
- Volunteer at an animal shelter- play with the dogs and cats, help to brush them, and clean up after them.
- Bake cookies together and deliver to the fire station or police station.
- Call up a single mom and offer to babysit her children so she can go Christmas shopping. Fun play-date for the kids, plus a much needed break for a mom.
- Deliver a Christmas tree to a family in need or take one to an assisted living or nursing home facility.

SERVING IDEAS CONTINUED...

- School supplies are often on sale around this time of the year or get put in bargain bins for people to use as stocking stuffers. Load up on these and send them to school with your kid. Teachers spend way too much of their own money on classroom supplies and this would free up some extra income for them around the holiday.
- Take chalk and drive around to your friends' houses. Have you and/or your kids write kind words and bible verses about the friend on their driveway. It will wash off during the next rain but make their day in the meantime!
- We all know an area where homeless people tend to always be- maybe outside a certain building or at the end of an exit ramp. Make a bag of food (protein bars, pop top canned food, peanut butter and crackers, dried fruit, nuts, etc.) and keep it in the car until you find a person who needs it. Don't give cash, but show compassion!
- Find a need and meet it. We are all on social media and see need daily. Did a friend's house burn down? Take supplies. Someone sick? Take a meal.

Contact the Missions Office at Faith Promise Church – missions@faithpromise.org or call 865-251-2590