

FIRST Groups B.L.E.S.S. Updates

At FIRST, *our groups exist to help us grow in our relationship with God and each other.* But for what? Why does God want us to grow? We are convicted that God wants to use the strength and community of our groups, to bless the people where we live work and play. Especially the people we know who do not have a relationship with God. This is how we'll fulfill the Jesus Mission to "go and make disciples" (Matt 28-18-20).

As groups, we want to intentionally "B.L.E.S.S." people each week.¹ *What do we mean by that?*

B – Begin with prayer: We will pray for the people where we live work and play.

L – Listen: We will intentionally listen to the people in our lives where we live work and play.

E – Eat: We will share meals with the people where we live work and play.

S – Serve: We will respond to the needs we discover among the people where we live, work, and play.

S – Story: We will share the story of Jesus and what He is doing in our lives with the people where we live work and play.

So in your group:

- *Start every prayer time by asking, "who did you B.L.E.S.S. this week?"*
- Write down what each of your group members say, and follow up week by week.
- ENCOURAGE: This is not meant to shame, but to empower us to take intentional steps to be a blessing. If all else fails, you can encourage timid or nervous group members to start by intentionally praying for God to open doors for them to be a blessing (Colossians 4:2-3)
- Continue to share personal prayer requests and praises.

This subtle shift in times of prayer can lead to a massive impact over time. Thanks for helping your group grow and be a blessing!

¹ This B.L.E.S.S. acronym was originally developed as a church resource by Dave Ferguson.
https://smile.amazon.com/Discover-Your-Mission-Dave-Ferguson/dp/0983086486/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1539805578&sr=8-1&keywords=discover+your+mission+now



Group Discussion Guide

I Love My Community Week 4: Nehemiah 5:14-18, 12:27-47, Matthew 20:25-26

Big Idea: *Our posture matters more than our position.*

Leader Note: You'll notice several of these leader notes throughout the guide. These don't have to be read out loud. But you can if they're helpful. They are simply here to help you navigate discussion with a little extra knowledge or helpful tips. If I can help you with anything before group, please feel free to get a hold of me! You can easily contact me at daniel@fcc-online.org

Leader Resource: The Bible Project does a great review of the book of Nehemiah (and Ezra) here: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/ezra-nehemiah/> - We encourage you to take 8 minutes to check out this video and share it with any of your group leaders looking to dive deeper into God's Word.

ICEBREAKER: (5 MIN)

- Question: Who is someone famous who you think you might be nervous if you had the chance to meet them? And why?

CONNECT: (5 MIN)

- Say this: *There's no person so small and insignificant that they can't bless their community, so how can we move our communities to restoration? When a lot of us think of what it means to lead, we think about our position, but what matters most is our posture.*
- Connect Question: What characteristics would make for a good boss?

STARTERS: (10-15 MIN)

- Read: Nehemiah 5:14-16
- Question: What makes Nehemiah different than all the other governors of his region before him?
 - (Leader Note: Nehemiah is a man of the people. He refuses to lay heavy burdens upon his people and workers.)
- Question: Nehemiah says his “reverence for God” impacted his approach to his people. Why should our relationship with God always change how we treat others?
- Read: Nehemiah 5:17-18
- Question: Rather than demand special treatment as the governor, Nehemiah went out of his way to provide for at least 150 people in his community. How do you think that impacted his community’s work in restoring the wall?
- Question: Let’s imagine that Nehemiah took special treatment as the governor, or was harsh to his citizens and fellow workers. How would that have impacted their work on the wall?

DISCOVER: (30 MIN)

- Question: On Sunday we talked about the difference between moral authority and positional authority. What makes them different?
 - (Leader Note: As an exercise, you can even ask folks who weren’t there on Sunday to guess what they think the differences may be. In summary: moral authority = trust/relationship. Positional authority = obligation/formality)
- Question: It takes a long time to build credibility or moral authority as a leader. Why is moral authority such a fragile thing?
 - (Leader Note: Any time someone sees inconsistency between what we say and what we do, it breaks trust.)
- Question: Much of what made Nehemiah an effective leader was his ability to take the posture of a servant. Who have you known to be a servant leader in your life?
- Read: Matthew 20:25-26
- Question: Jesus had the insight to realize that true leadership comes through service. How did Jesus model this in His own life?
 - (Leader Note: Allow group members to give examples. If your group is full of newer believers and seekers, feel free to help provide some examples here.)
- Question: What is a need in the community where you live that could really be met through servant leadership?
 - Follow-Up Question: What can you do to pray and help meet that need?

RESPOND/PRAYER: (15 MIN)

- Question: When we talk about “B.L.E.S.S.ing” our communities (Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat, Serve, Share) which of those have you found to be the most challenging for you? And why?
- Prompt: Like we began to think through last week, “Who did you B.L.E.S.S. this week?”
 - (Leader Note: If needed, explain the idea of B.L.E.S.S. to your group. Refer to the cheat sheet on the front of the discussion guide).
- Prompt: Pray that God would open our eyes to see the people who He wants us to B.L.E.S.S. where we live work and play.
- Prompt: Spend time sharing prayer requests.

WRAP UP:

- Prompt: Read Philippians 2:5-11.
- Say this: May God give us the ability, like Jesus our Lord, to take the posture of a servant. May we learn to bless our communities, and be the Church where we live work and play.