



THE WHY WEEK ONE

Acts 1:8 lets us know the Church's mission from the very beginning was to take the good news of Jesus into all areas of

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our city, nation and world. Churches in Fresno have been doing this for years, but in an increasingly divisive world, our culture is dying to see faith in action – a faith that is more than just words and proclamation, but actual flesh and bones.

Serve Fresno is part of an initiative led by Every Neighborhood Partnership to rally churches from Fresno and its surrounding areas to serve our city. As the united body of Christ, we desire to put active

hands and feet to our faith, expressing ongoing love for our community as one Church.

Churches and small groups are the primary vehicle of Serve Fresno. Over the years we have witnessed many churches and

small groups wrestle with God's Word, and seek to discern and decide how to respond to the needs and assets of our community. Serve Fresno pushes on people because it forces them to recognize that in order to be an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ we must be willing to serve and love others. To simply come to church and not live and act as the church is not a biblical practice, and we want to help people gain awareness and then equip them to respond with obedience to what God is calling them to.

Serve Fresno is about Jesus and our willingness to live like Him in every pocket of our city. For some churches and small groups, this is a new experience, and we are excited about the process, and what is going to happen to you and through you.

This guide is designed to help you, as a church or small group, navigate through the Serve Fresno process. As important as the type of project your group participates in and the impact it has on others, we are convinced the process will be just as meaningful for your church or group. As you pray, plan and prepare, you will want to be aware of what God is shaping in you, as He draws you closer to Him and each other along the way.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:9-14, ESV).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What have you been delivered from? What have you transformed to? How does this shape your life and the way you live?
2. What does it mean to be filled with all spiritual wisdom and understanding? Where can you go for wisdom and understanding?
3. What does walking in a manner worthy of the Lord look like? What are practical ways you can bear fruit? Why is it even important to bear fruit?
4. Who is the source of power in your life to obtain spiritual wisdom and produce spiritual fruit?
5. What does this passage have to do with Serve Fresno? What lessons can be taken from Paul's words that you can apply to your church or group?

PRAYER

Pray for:

Wisdom and discernment for your group concerning this year's project or opportunity

Lives to be changed and transformed during the process

God to show up in powerful and simple ways as you serve together

Other small groups and individuals who will participate this year

Our city and valley, and the impact Serve Fresno might have on them

Christ to be proclaimed and people to come to faith in Him

Be thinking of opportunities or projects that might be possible for your group to get involved with this year. Next week you will brainstorm and come up with possible ideas and next steps.



THE HOW WEEK TWO

Use this guide to help your church or group brainstorm and strategize one way you can corporately be a blessing to those around you during the Serve Fresno week. This guide will continue to help refine your vision for being the church in your neighborhood.

PRAYER

As you move into a time of planning, take 5 minutes to pray that the Holy Spirit would give you God's heart for your neighborhood, city and world, and His eyes to see the needs and opportunities there. Pray that the Holy Spirit would help your church or group find one opportunity to engage in, and that He would use this activity or event to bless those around you.

BRAINSTORMING

Next, move into a time of brainstorming. In order to encourage everyone's participation, get in groups of 3 or 4. Generate ideas of what your church or group could do or be a part of. It doesn't have to be big, but take 15 minutes to dream based on your group members' spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, passions and experiences. *Note the Final Thoughts below if you get stuck.

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What gifts, skills or passions do you have as a group? Is there anything that corporately comes to the surface when you consider these?

2. Where do you live, work and play? Are there any natural areas where your group can come together to care for and serve?

3. What are some areas of town you know about or care about? Is there a place your group has wanted to serve in the past but hasn't been able to?

4. As you list ideas, what stands out to you? Is there anything that excites the group? Is there anything that seems compelling for the group to participate in?

Now the work of brainstorming gets real. Gather back together to debrief for 20 minutes. Choose one person from each group to share the top 3 ideas they came up with. As a group, narrow the list down to the top 3 ideas overall. As ideas emerge, begin to explore how those ideas could play out for your group as well as who and what would be needed to make it happen. Finally, narrow it down further to the top idea.

To help execute this final idea, get back into those same small groups for 15 minutes and ask the following questions:

1. What resources do you need?

2. What connections do you have to pull it off?

3. What roles do you need to fill?

4. What can you contribute?

5. What date and time should you schedule your activity?

6. Where will you do it?

Gather back as a larger group for 15 minutes and have one person share from each small group what they came up with. Then create action steps to pull off your event or activity. Make sure everybody has a responsibility. Come up with necessary due dates, and discuss how you will communicate what is happening with everyone.

PRAYER

Take 5 minutes to pray and thank God for blessing your time and this process. Pray that He would use your ordinary and simple acts of intentionality to build His kingdom in every neighborhood.

FINAL THOUGHTS

1. You will likely end up with more ideas than you can possibly participate in for this year's Serve Fresno. Don't worry. Just make a list and keep them in mind for the future.
2. If you are having a hard time deciding what project to participate in, give priority to the ones that allow for the most people to join.
3. If you have an idea of what sort of project you would like to be involved with but need help making a connection, let your home church know. There are many local partnerships and non-profits in town you could be connected to.
4. If your group is made up of families, try to find a project that kids can participate in and invite their friends to join in with them.
5. Not all projects need to be labor intensive. If your group needs something that requires less physical effort, then seek one out.
6. This process may generate ideas for individuals in the group that don't fit a group project. That's OK! Encourage each other to pursue some things on their own if God is stirring them.
7. Pray a lot.
8. Have fun!



THE DEBRIEF WEEK THREE

Serve Fresno 2015 is over! Can you believe it? We praise God for every good work that was performed by His people. We want to celebrate what God has done all over this city for His glory. It is appropriate and important for you as a small group to take time to reflect upon the entire Serve Fresno experience. Make it meaningful by identifying what you learned about God, yourself and your group.

REFLECT

WHAT?

Take time to describe what happened during the entire project, who was involved, what was accomplished, what needs were met, etc. Ask several members of the group to describe what happened with your project, or go around in a circle and have each person provide one adjective to describe what happened or what was accomplished. You could also have a group discussion in which you ask the following questions:

1. What were some of the things you noticed?
2. How has this changed or reshaped your understanding of God's Word or the Christian life?

SO WHAT?

Discuss what thoughts or feelings your project provoked, or what lessons you learned from this experience. Consider the following questions:

1. What do you know now that you didn't know before?
2. What attitudes and feelings do you have about the experience that you didn't have before?
3. What part of this experience was most valuable for you? For your group?

4. What do you think you will remember or retain in others ways after this experience?
5. How have you contributed to this group?

NOW WHAT?

Serve Fresno is designed to be more than a one-week experience in that it would become a lifestyle for disciples of Jesus Christ. The “Now What?” questions are to help you and your church or group consider what’s next or decide on continuing steps. You may want to ask some of the following questions:

1. What are some things you appreciate about the members of this church or group?
2. What changes would you suggest for future church or group experiences?
3. Where does your church or group go from here?

FINAL THOUGHTS

It might be appropriate for you to follow up with the organization or people you served during the project. Let them reflect on the experience, and see if there is any information that would be helpful to your group both now and in the future. Set a time to meet or even to do another serve project down the road.

Tell your story. It is good to share with other people what happened and how God moved. This may include talking to family, other members of your home church, or friends and neighbors. If you have pictures or videos from the experience, post them online as a way of celebrating what God did. Your church would love to hear your stories, so send an email with pictures and information to your pastor. Also make sure you use the hashtag “#ServeFresno” for any social media posts.

PRAYER

A final prayer for all of us:

May we be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified *us* to share in the inheritance of the saints in light
(Colossians 1:11-12, ESV, words in italics edited for emphasis).