



# SERVE FRESNO

## LIFE GROUP GUIDE

The Life Group Guide that follows is a four-part guide to help your community navigate your calling in the city where you live, play or work. We hope this tool is beneficial in understanding where God is calling you and how He can use you. If Every Neighborhood Partnership (ENP) staff can come alongside you, your Life Group or your church to serve our city let us know by calling 559.400.7310 or emailing us at [info@everyneighborhood.org](mailto:info@everyneighborhood.org)

# WHY?

*Why has God placed you or your family in Fresno, Clovis or a surrounding community?*

**READ** Colossians 1:9-14 (NASB)

*For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued 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.*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What have you been delivered from? What have you been transformed to? How does this shape your life and the way you live?

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?

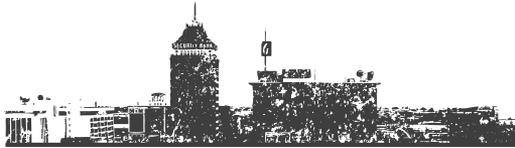
What does this passage have to do with Serve Fresno? What lessons can be taken from Paul's words that you can apply to your family, Life Group or gathering?

How do these verses impact your family?

## ACTION STEPS

Ask for wisdom and discernment on how to pray for Fresno, Clovis and the surrounding areas.

As a family, Life Group or group of friends, create a daily prayer calendar for issues you care about.



# FRESNO

## WHAT IS BROKEN? WHAT IS WORKING? WHAT IS GOD'S VISION?

### Discussion Questions

When people talk about the good things of Fresno, what do they mention? How about the negative things?

What areas of town have you lived in, and how have you experienced Fresno differently in those areas?

*Jeremiah 29:7 says, "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (ESV).*

The word *welfare* is the Hebrew word *Shalom*, which means "complete wholeness" or "something restored as it was at creation."

What does this verse mean to you? How can the welfare of our city impact our own welfare?

How can the church across Central California be part of seeing Shalom come to our cities?

\*Suggested video on justice: <http://bit.ly/2F90pwZ>

## FRESNO'S CHALLENGES

A 2008 Brookings Institute study stated Fresno had the largest concentration of poverty of any large city in America.

*Definition of Concentrated Poverty:* The tendency in American cities to cluster the poor into poorer areas of the city. When a neighborhood has 40% or more of its residents living under the poverty line it is a concentrated poverty neighborhood. Evidence shows that such a clustered impoverished situation creates even more difficulties for the poor families in a community but also impacts the economic opportunity of that city as a whole. In other words, not dealing with the problem of concentrated poverty in a city is not only grieving to God, it creates a situation where economic growth is difficult for us all.

Our problem was even worse than pre-Katrina New Orleans, long considered the worst city for poverty concentration in the country. Fresno is currently number two in the nation behind Bakersfield, California.

### **OTHER FACTS ABOUT POVERTY IN FRESNO:**

28.2% of Fresno County residents live below the national poverty line

That means some 263,000 Fresno County residents live in households where a family of four earns less than \$23,300 per year as a family or less than \$13,000 annually for an individual

This is one of the highest percentages of any counties in the U.S.

14% of West Fresno children read at grade level, compared to 29% for all of Fresno Unified and 45% for all of California

Concentrated poverty areas have less access to banks, to supermarkets where healthy foods are more readily available, to good health care and to safe parks and green space for healthy and safe activities

## ACTIVITY

Everyone get on their phones and go to [everyneighborhood.org/maps](http://everyneighborhood.org/maps). Take a look at the first 5 maps.

What observations do you have?

What patterns do you see?

What does this tell you about economic disparity?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

When our families have this many social needs and face these disparities, do you think it's a bigger challenge to talk/connect with them about their spiritual needs? Does it make sense to first walk alongside them with their physical needs, which will open their hearts to our message of Christ and His hope?

Were you aware of the issue of concentrated poverty in Fresno?

What could the impacts of concentrated poverty be on the people who live in the poorest areas of Fresno? What could the impact be on the rest of the city and its citizens?

Knowing God commanded us to "seek" the welfare of our city, what do you think our reaction should be to statistics such as these?

## PART THREE

# FRESNO'S ASSETS

Sure we have our challenges, but if we start and dwell on what we and others lack, it's practically impossible to build upon that. If things are going to change, we are going to need to use what we have and ask God to multiply it (Matthew 14:13-21). We need to focus on our assets. Assets are simply any useful or valuable thing, person or quality.

Did you know Fresno has the highest church attendance behind Bakersfield? That means the city is full of people who love and follow Jesus. That is a huge asset we can build on. Consider the assets in your own Life Group, family or group of friends.

## ACTIVITY

Grab a sheet of paper and markers.

Everyone, present your Hands, Head, Heart and Home on your paper in any way you want (as a word, drawing etc.).

Next to these representations, list or illustrate the following:

**Hands** = things you are good at doing (examples: building, gardening, skiing, cooking, cleaning the sink, learning new languages, being organized)

**Head** = things you know a lot about (examples: art history, hip hop, Thai food, yodeling, hamsters, growing vegetables)

**Heart** = things you are passionate about (examples: running, family, social justice, ending world hunger, Red Sox)

**Home** = important affiliations or connections within the community

*Note: Items may appear in multiple headings (example: I am very good at fishing, I know a lot about fish, and I am passionate about fishing)*

When everyone has finished, let each person have an opportunity to present his/her chart to the group. Allow each person enough time to highlight the things they consider to be most important. Imagine if you could do this activity in our church, in your neighborhood and across our city. Do you see all the assets?

If space allows, hang the charts up around the room for people to see as they get to know the members of the group.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why is starting with assets really important for doing service work?

How could you focus on assets first and help others discover their assets?

How will you use this information regarding Serve Fresno?

PART FOUR  
**GOD'S END GOAL**

**READ** Psalm 85:9-13, Isaiah 65:18-25 and Isaiah 62:2-5

A city like Fresno, with over 500 churches, shouldn't just be satisfied with having a "Christian" city, but should strive for the greater partnership with God to see His glory dwell here with us. When that glory comes, here's what the passages we read say a city should look like:

Things are renewed better than in the past  
(Isaiah 65:17, 61:4)

There's better health and health care  
(Isaiah 65:20)

There's good housing available  
(Isaiah 65:21-22)

There's abundant food  
(Isaiah 65:21-22)

Business will be profitable  
(Isaiah 65:22)

Children will be well educated and have an inheritance  
(Isaiah 65:23, 61:9)

Laws come into alignment with God's law; there is justice and fairness  
(Isaiah 61:8)

People from the outside will notice the economic blessing  
(Isaiah 61:9, 62:4)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

After reflecting on the challenges, assets and God's vision, how can you be a part of the transformation God wants to bring to our city? What is one thing you are feeling called to learn more about, be, or do?

## FURTHER STUDY & LEARNING

**Learn more about** the issues of our city and region.

How poverty impacts children in Fresno County:

<http://bit.ly/2FasNig>

*The Fresno Bee* on the economic divide in Fresno:

<http://bit.ly/2Tr2HLd>

*The Atlantic* on Fresno's Mason/Dixon Divide:

<http://bit.ly/2Rwf3UW>

Additional resources from ENP for discovering more about your city:

<http://everyneighborhood.org/maps>

A great website to learn more about issues affecting kids:

<http://bit.ly/2FFxDUH>

Learn more about specific Fresno neighborhoods with these  
Neighborhood Data Sheets:

<http://bit.ly/2HiXjZo>

Dive deeper into God's heart for Fresno with the Vision 22 Bible Study:

<http://bit.ly/2DhAukL>

**Pray for Central California** and ask God to give you His heart for all of its people.

Pray at **5:59** every day for the "559" area code

**Explore our city.** Drive to some of the areas of the city where you've never been, and ask God to help you see others as He sees them.

Use the ENP Drive Tour: [everyneighborhood.org/drivetour](http://everyneighborhood.org/drivetour)



# SERVE FRESNO

## DEBRIEF

Serve Fresno 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 Life Group, family or group of friends to take time to reflect upon the entire Serve Fresno experience. Make it meaningful by identifying what you learned about God, yourself and your community.

### WHAT?

Take time to describe what happened during the entire project, such as 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. If your group has younger children, have them draw a picture of their experience. 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 the 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 other ways after this experience?
5. How have you contributed to this group? (Consider the Hands, Head, Heart and Home exercise from Part 2.)

## **NOW WHAT?**

Serve Fresno is designed to be more than a one-time experience in that it would become a lifestyle or normal rhythm for disciples of Jesus Christ. The "Now What?" questions are to help you and your Life Group, family or group of friends 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 group or family?
2. What changes would you suggest for future church or group experiences?
3. Where does your family or group go from here?

It might be appropriate for you to follow up with the organization you worked with 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.

A final prayer for all of us (based on Colossians 1:11-12, ESV)

*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.*