

Small Group Guide: Finding Purpose and Making a Difference

Opening Question/ Icebreaker:

Share a funny or memorable moment related to accumulating or decluttering stuff in your life. How did it make you feel?

Key Takeaways:

1. God calls us to make a difference in our communities, not just focus on our personal comfort.
2. Investigating and understanding the needs of our community is crucial before taking action.
3. There will be opposition when doing God's work, but we must persevere.
4. Serving God often requires sacrifice and stepping out of our comfort zones.
5. The church should focus outwardly on the community, not just inwardly on itself.

Bible Study & Discussion Questions:

1. **Read Nehemiah 1.** What do you think motivated Nehemiah to be concerned about Jerusalem despite the 140 years lapse since its destruction? How can we apply this sense of urgency and purpose to the brokenness we see in our own communities today?
2. **Read Nehemiah 2:9-17.** When Nehemiah surveyed the damage to Jerusalem's walls, he took time to understand the needs before beginning the rebuilding process. How can we apply this principle of "investigating before initiating" in our ministries or community service? Share examples of how understanding needs can lead to more effective service.
3. Pastor Dan highlighted that different neighborhoods have different needs. How might this apply to our area, and how can we tailor our outreach accordingly?
4. The sermon mentioned "vision drift" where churches turn inward. How can we as individuals and as a group ensure we remain outwardly focused on our community's needs?
5. **Read Nehemiah 2:10.** Sanballat and Tobiah opposed Nehemiah's work to help the Israelites. What kinds of opposition have you faced (or do you anticipate) when attempting to do God's work? How does knowing Nehemiah encountered resistance encourage you in your faith journey?
6. **Read Nehemiah 2:17-18.** Nehemiah called on the people to rebuild the wall, emphasizing God's hand in the initiative. Discuss how we can encourage our own community to participate in God's work. What role does testimony play in motivating others to join a common mission?
7. Reflect on Nehemiah's story and Pastor Dan's "Self-Reflection" questions about giving up comfort for God's will:
 - What is it that burdens your heart?
 - Would you be willing to give up comfort to accomplish God's Will?
 - If you do not see the brokenness in and around our community, would you be bold this week and pray for God to open your eyes?

Practical Applications:

1. **Prayer Walk:** Organize a prayer walk through different neighborhoods in your community, praying for the specific needs you observe.
2. **Community Needs Assessment:** As a group, research and compile a list of the most pressing needs in your local area.
3. **Comfort Zone Challenge:** Each member identifies one way they can step out of their comfort zone to serve others this week and reports back next meeting.
4. **Outreach Planning:** Brainstorm ideas for a community outreach event that addresses a specific need you've identified.
5. **Personal Reflection:** Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal any areas where you've become "used to the brokenness" in your community and how you can respond.
6. **Invitational Evangelism:** Each member commits to inviting one unchurched person to a church event or service in the coming month.
7. **Skills Inventory:** Create a list of skills and resources within your group that could be used to serve the community, and discuss how to put them into action.

Closing Prayer:

Conclude with a group prayer asking God to guide each member in finding and fulfilling their purpose, breaking through any comfort that might hinder them, and being used to transform their communities.