

SENT BY GOD INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

INTRODUCTION

We are a community on mission. We are a community sent by God into the world. No matter how easy it is to turn inwardly focused, the church does not exist for itself, but those beyond its walls. This is a resource designed to help each person investigate where God might be sending them in the context of their already existing community.

A note to leaders: this content is written to be used during the first 10 - 15 minutes of your group time for 8 group meetings. The goal is to spark a meaningful conversation that will reveal the group members next steps in being sent into their neighborhood.

Before your group meeting, read the questions for a given conversation box and choose the one or two that best reflects the culture of your group. The questions are written on a sliding scale of vulnerability. Encourage one another to engage the questions at their comfort level.

If you or someone in your group missed our sermon series, SENT, you can revisit the message on our website by visiting www.fairfax.cc/watchandread.



WEEK 1

SENT TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Your neighborhood is most often defined as the people who live next door to you. However, this is your opportunity to notice the other neighborhoods you are also connected with: work, school, sports field, gym, coffee shop, etc.

As a starting place, choose one neighborhood you are most open to living out Jesus call to love your neighbor. If you are married or close with someone in this group, consider choosing the same neighborhood.

Name of all the neighborhoods you are a part of and who are the people that you know in those neighborhoods?

Of your neighborhoods, which group of relationships are you most interested in engaging further?

As our group has been discussing loving our neighbor, what are you noticing about yourself (thoughts, feelings, posture)?

NEXT BEST STEP

Take this week to study your neighborhood. Discover what you know about the people and what you don't know (for example name, contact info, work/school, hopes and dreams). If you are asking the question, who is my neighbor? Take a look at Luke 10:25 - 37 for what Jesus has to say.



WEEK 2

THE NEEDS OF MY NEIGHBORHOOD

Now that you have identified a specific neighborhood, it is important to observe and inventory information about your neighborhood that will help you better connect with and bless others. Jesus tells us that when we bless others by responding to their needs, it is as if we are doing it directly for him. Yet, unless we take time to stop and pay attention to the needs around us, we could miss seeing the face of Jesus.

Take some time to reflect on and list the needs of your neighborhood. Be as specific as possible.

What are the physical needs of those in your neighborhood? (food, clothing, yard work, etc)

What are the emotional needs of those in your neighborhood? (friendship, care, support, etc)

What are the spiritual needs of those in your neighborhood? (hope, love, Jesus, etc)

NEXT BEST STEP

Next time you are in your neighborhood, go on a prayer walk (or a “prayer sit” if it is in a space that would be strange to walk through). Consider reading Matthew 25:31-46. Ask God to open your eyes to additional needs that you may not have noticed at first. Be ready to share with the group next week.



WEEK 3

GOD AT WORK IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

No matter how many needs exist, there are also ways in which God is already at work. Even though it is difficult to see, being aware of what God is already doing might reveal a specific way that some of the neighborhood needs can be met or in which direction God might be moving.

Take some time to reflect on how God is already at work in your neighborhood.

What are the unique and positive things (events, traditions, attitudes) that are already happening in your neighborhood?

What are the resources that are available? These could be physical resources (open spaces, finances), human resources (people who are gifted in specific gifts or occupations), or communicative resources (social media, weekly emails).

Are there any ways in which the things that are already happening or the available resources could meet some of the needs that you are aware of from last week?

NEXT BEST STEP

Find an opportunity to brainstorm with one of your neighbors to discover other happenings/resources they may be aware of. Then, spend some time reading and reflecting on Luke 6:1-14.



WEEK 4

BETTER TOGETHER

Your life is one of immense value. And so is the lives of your neighbors. Each of your neighbors has a story. As a follower of Christ are you curious about the story of your neighbors? It's likely that no one else is, let alone is interested in understanding who they are, what's important to them, or how to help support them when life gets hard.

Relationships lead to community when we decide to first understand ourselves and then consistently lead with curiosity and care of others.

How do you best relate or connect with others?

What are you not good at that you might need help becoming better at or becoming more consistent?

Is there someone in this group that you think can best help or advise me?

NEXT BEST STEP

Pair up with another person in the group to continue this conversation. How can you support and encourage one another?

Scripture

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. Sometimes disappointment and difficulties open up opportunities for us to enter into a new or deeper relationship with someone. What experience(s) might you draw empathy or compassion from you toward one of your neighbors?



WEEK 5

IDENTIFYING OBSTACLES

For some of us loving our neighbor is as natural as breathing but for others of us, it is hard, exhausting and uncomfortable work. We can get stuck moving forward with God's call to love our neighbor because of the emotional and physical obstacles that seem to lay ahead, especially fear and time.

As you think about loving your neighbor, what concerns do you have? Need a few ideas? Here's a list to get you started:

finding time

takes too much time

being rejected

awkward interactions

not knowing what to say

Other: _____

Of the concerns you listed, pick one to focus on. Give an example of how this concern shows up for you.

Discuss some practical ways you can overcome your fear of interacting with neighbors you don't know. How might this group encourage you push through?

NEXT BEST STEP

This week pay attention to what you are telling yourself about loving God and loving neighbor. Read Psalm 19:14 and ask God to give you his perspective, heart and passion for loving your neighbors.



WEEK 6

GOD AT WORK THROUGH YOU

God is always on the move and He goes before us to stir in the lives of those around us. It is God who calls people to himself, we are merely His humble instruments. God also gives each of us a unique and personal call to be used for His purpose.

In week 2 you named the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of your neighborhood. In weeks 3 and 4, you named the resources already present or at your disposal. You also noted areas God might already be active. Our hope is that you take what you are discovering about your neighborhood and begin to identify ideas to meet the needs that exist.

What do you sense God is inviting you to do or be in your neighborhood?

How might you create space in your schedule or home to invite others in?

What is one practical step you need to take to move forward?

NEXT BEST STEP

Take this week to allow the ideas to simmer. What ideas continue to come to the surface? Take note of any new ideas beginning to emerge. Take time to ask God to guide you and give you wisdom. As you read Acts 2:42 - 47, remember the core component of encouragement and support you have in this group.



WEEK 7

CURIOSITY IS THE KEY TO PERSEVERANCE

As persons who have been sent, Jesus prays that we will live sanctified lives. Sanctification is not about living holy lives so that we will be acceptable to God. It's about living lives that are so attractive it creates curiosity among those who are close to us but far from God. When you live a life of relentless love and relationship, others will be curious and open to experiencing community with you.

For many reasons, each person in the group is in a different space about what, how and when to engage his/her neighborhood. That's okay! Take time now to process the ideas that are beginning to take root.

However well formed or unformed your idea is, share it with the group. Group, ask questions that help him/her deepen exploration of the idea – e.g. what, how, when questions.

How can the group help and encourage you to get your idea off the ground?

NEXT BEST STEP

Consider how can this group support and pray for you as you continue to step into how God is specifically sending you into your relationships with your neighbors?

This week set aside 10 minutes to read and reflect on Philippians 2:1-11. When we consider living attractive lives, we look to the love, power, and humility of Jesus.



WEEK 8

NOW, WHAT?

Living SENT lives doesn't have a finish line. Each week has a wide variety of opportunities to encourage and experience meaningful connection with neighbors in every area of our life. As a group, create space each time you gather to quickly check in on what God is doing in the context of your neighborhood. Here are a few questions to spark conversation in the weeks ahead. And don't feel you must wait until someone asks to share insight into your experience or support you need!

Have you experienced a breakthrough with your idea and/or someone in your neighborhood?

Is a new idea surfacing for how God may be calling you to begin creating community amongst a group of neighbors?

What decisions can the group hold you accountable to completing? What is the timeframe - 7 days? 30 days? How would you like the group to hold you accountable?

NEXT BEST STEP

Set aside time to read and reflect on Hebrews 10:19-25. The presence of Jesus in us is an unending source of power to draw from as we lean into our SENTness.

