

FBG Vision Series Small Groups

We want to remind you that each session has some key components we want you to be familiar with before you get started:

Location: There are two primary locations on a map you definitely need to know. The first is where you are and the second is where you are going. Each session will begin with pointing out where you are and locating where you are going during that session.

Leg of the journey: A good team looks at the map and identifies the different elements and challenges of that particular leg of the journey. Your group will talk about what those challenges and key elements are and how you can navigate them.

Gear: Anybody who has done much adventuring knows that the gear you carry can make all the difference. The right gear can make a difficult journey enjoyable. The wrong gear can make even the easiest journey painful. We want to help you identify the right gear for the journey ahead.

Team role: The good news is that God didn't design you to make this journey alone. He has provided the church family (and smaller groups within that family) to specifically help each other along the way. A good team knows each other's strengths and weaknesses and learns how to work together to help each person on the team play a significant role in getting to the goal. You'll work through some ways your smaller team within the FBG family can help each other move forward together.

These sessions are building blocks for how you can walk together as a small group and as a part of the FBG family. As you walk through this last session, be intentional about setting patterns for how your group will function long after you have finished this series.

Enjoy this leg of the journey!

Session 4 – Help Others Do the Same



Location: Picture a time you were really excited to get away and enjoy your favorite hobby that you don't get a lot of time to do. Maybe it's running, photography, hunting or whatever your hobby is. You make a plan and get all set up when you find out someone who has never experienced this hobby before wants to go along and learn from you. What are your first thoughts? (Be honest!)

You allow them to come along and the experience is a bit rocky. They slow you down, the pictures don't turn out quite right or they move at the wrong time and scare off what you were hunting. You end up frustrated, but then you remind yourself you were in their shoes once and someone took the time to help you learn. Over the course of time, you continue to help them learn and there are some really challenging moments and some really encouraging moments along the way.

In the end, you see them become proficient at the hobby and you find a sense of deep satisfaction and fulfillment from helping them along the way. In fact, you realize you learned quite a bit along the way as well that made you even better at your hobby. You find that what you thought was going to be a burden (and at times it was) became one of your greatest joys. Then you see them help someone else learn the hobby and your satisfaction grows all the more.

What you thought would take away from your experience actually multiplied the joy by more than you could have imagined.

We focused last week on loving people right where they are. We are going to move along the path this week to not only loving others, but intentionally investing in helping them learn to know and love the Guide, love people and in turn introduce others to the Guide. Our location on the map this week is helping others do the same.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (NIV).

We have seen the opportunity we have to love God because He has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus. But look at what these verses say. The ministry God has given each of us is one

of reconciliation. We not only find the joy of knowing the Guide and walking with Him, but we have been tasked with helping others know the Guide. Not only have we been tasked with helping others know Him; but we have been built and created to help others know Him. God designed us to thrive as we move closer to Him **and** help others move closer to Him.

Why does this matter?

The ultimate goal is to be like a ready bride prepared for the return of Christ. Our ultimate destination is what the Bible talks about as being a ready bride for the day Christ returns for His church.

Revelation 19:7: “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready” (NIV).

- One part of being ready for the return of Christ is individually being ready. This means loving God and setting the patterns in our lives that lead us to love God well and in turn love people. Ultimately trusting the work of the Lord in our lives.

Titus 3:3-7: “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (NIV).

- A second part of being a ready bride is helping others be prepared for Christ’s return. God’s plan includes us, but His plan is much bigger than us. His plan is for people who know Him and have experienced a regeneration of their life because of Him to help introduce others to Him and walk with them as they grow in their preparedness for the return of Christ.

2 Timothy 2:1-2: “You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (NIV).

Being ready individually and helping others be ready is like a two-stroke engine. Both parts are required for the engine to run smoothly. Helping others prepare for the return of Christ is a vital part of us being individually ready. We help them prepare by pointing them to the Guide and encouraging them to love people the way they have been loved by the Guide through a growing

dependence on Him. The Lord will use your investment in others to refine and grow you in the way you love Him and other people. The result is that both you and the other person grow in loving God and loving people and being more prepared as a part of the ready bride of Christ.

Questions:

- In what ways are you preparing for the return of Christ? Individually? With others?
- How have you seen the Lord grow your relationship with Him as you have invested in helping other people grow in their relationship with Him?

Leg of the journey: The best trails to hike have incredible scenery along the way. If you hike up a couple of miles there might be a beautiful lake or wildlife to enjoy. The trail may stretch on for miles beyond these beautiful diversions, but many times we stop here, content that we have found all we were looking for on this particular hike. This is wonderful if you are out for a couple-hour nature hike with no real agenda or purpose. But if you were four miles in on a trail and your buddy had a medical emergency, you would not go down the path at a leisurely pace and stop to fish in the lake along the way. You have a mission and a purpose to get help and get back as soon as you can.

Our spiritual journey can be very similar. The Lord has created a path that has some incredible beauty along the way and He intends these beauties to become instigators of our worship of Him as the Creator. But there is a danger when we treat our lives like they are a short couple-hour nature hike with no real purpose instead of an intentional hike with a clear mission. We have been created with great purpose and significance. As we talked about earlier, 2 Timothy 2:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 5:17-19 point out this mission of investing our lives in other people so they can know the Guide.

There are some significant barriers we have to face on this leg of the journey. Here are a couple of them:

1. **The difficulty of seeing the mission over ourselves.** In reality, we believe in the idea of focusing on others and we want to focus on others. Look at all the companies that are intentionally donating something to people in need every time you buy their product (shoes, gum, coffee). There is a desire to want to help others. But when we examine our lives, we frequently find excuses to keep the primary focus on ourselves. Helping others becomes focused on convenience and not sacrifice. When I have time, I'll be glad to help. So we have a challenge in seeking to see our lives in light of the mission instead of in light of our convenience.

Think back to the trail analogy. If I am out on a nature hike, I can focus on what's convenient and best for me. But if I have a mission of getting help for my friend, my

convenience and the pain I feel running those four miles gets pushed out quickly because I know my mission and it is worth the sacrifice.

Questions:

- How have you been treating life recently? Like a nature hike or a hike with a mission? Explain.
- What areas of convenience do you perceive to be the most difficult for you to let go of so you can live on mission?

2. **Discerning the best priorities.** Even when we ask the Lord to help us live sacrificially, we still struggle with how to balance our time and resources. The old adage says: “The biggest enemy of the best is the good.” We can fill our time with pursuits that are good that may distract us from what God has planned as the best pursuits for our lives.

Questions:

- What are some good priorities that can distract us from the mission God’s created us for?
- How can you discern what is best?

Gear: If you’re going on a half-day nature hike to a lake, you might take a camera, fishing gear, a little water and a snack. If you’re going on a 10-mile trail race, you won’t take a camera or a fishing pole, but you will take a water pack and a snack for an energy boost. Whatever your mission is, you will take the gear that best helps you accomplish that mission. When we talk about the mission of helping others love God and love people, and in turn help other people learn to love God and love people, we want to have the right gear to accomplish this specific goal.

Here are a few pieces of gear that are important pieces of investing our lives in other people:

Piece of gear #1 – Renew your mind: Be reminded of the patterns of being in the Word, prayer and worship we talked about in Session 2.

Romans 12:1-2: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (NIV).

As you look toward helping others, you have to recognize the need for the Lord to continue working in your life to have your mind renewed. It is increasingly more difficult to steadfastly

pursue the mission the Lord created us for when we find ourselves moving toward our old patterns of sin. This will be an ongoing process of entrusting our lives to the Lord and His transforming power.

Question:

- How are you seeing the Lord work in renewing your mind right now?

Piece of gear #2 – Plan for people: This means intentionally looking at our schedules, resources and priorities and making people the focal point. If the mission is people, then it makes sense that we would focus on building our lives around helping people find the Guide. The question is, what does planning our life around people look like?

1. Start by looking at who God has already put in your path. Planning around people means to seek the Lord to help you find the best way to help each of these people know the Guide and grow in their relationship with Him (some examples: co-workers, neighbors, kids, spouse, friends, barber, A/C repair person, etc.). Sometimes we think we do not have opportunities to help influence others to move toward the Guide. But the real issue is that we need to ask the Guide to open our eyes to the people on the trail that are right around us.
2. Look at your current schedule. How can you be intentional with your schedule to influence others toward the Guide? For example, if you have kids that play sports, how can you use the time with the other parents intentionally to help introduce them to the Guide? If you travel regularly, how can you be intentional with the people the Lord puts in your path, even for a brief few days? Who are the co-workers right around you the Lord has placed there intentionally so you can get to know them and help introduce them to the Guide? Where do you spend the majority of your retired time and how can you leverage the opportunities there? Your current schedule is packed with opportunities to influence people for Christ.
3. Build some intentional and specific relationships. If you spend all your time with people whose faith is in about the same place as yours, you are missing opportunities to influence others and opportunities for your own growth. Here are three relationships that will be beneficial to intentionally invest your time in:
 - **Younger in the faith:** Who around you is younger in the faith that you might have an opportunity to help walk with them toward the Guide? Maybe you've been down the path right where they currently are and your experience might help them trust the Guide through that part of the path. Many times we miss these relationships because we do not feel "ready" to

help someone else. The Lord is more than capable of working through you in their life if you will be willing to trust Him.

- **Peers in the faith:** These are people who know you best and hold you accountable to following the Guide. These individuals are in about the same place as you are spiritually and will be incredible sounding boards to walk through life together. They will be some of your greatest encouragers and some of your greatest challengers to help spur you on toward the Lord.
- **Older in the faith:** If you do not have people in your life who are farther down the spiritual path than you, then you are missing incredible opportunities to learn and see God's faithfulness through the eyes of someone who has traveled the path longer than you. These relationships become pivotal treasures that leave us wanting to know the Guide in a similar way as the person who is older than us in the faith. These relationships help keep us looking forward rather than back. When we see the depth of God's faithfulness in these individuals' lives, we recognize that what is best lies ahead and not behind. (See the one-on-one disciple-making resource at the end of this session for questions to ask and keys to finding the right types of people for these relationships.)

Questions:

- Who are some people the Lord has put right around you? How can you be intentional with these individuals?
- What challenges do you face in seeking to plan your life toward people?
- How can you leverage your current schedule to influence others for Christ?
- Which relationships do you already have (younger/peer/older in the faith)? Which ones are you lacking? What can you do to seek to develop them?
- Which relationship is the hardest for you to develop?

Piece of gear #3 – Be prepared to share God's story in your life: Every believer in Christ has seen the Lord work in their life. Every believer in Christ has a story to tell of how the Lord has completely changed their life. It might be a very dramatic story or it might be through the grace of God that it seems common and unexciting. But the truth is, every story is incredibly exciting and dramatic because it means you have moved from death to life through Jesus Christ and there is nothing more dramatic than that. As we read the Bible, we see that the Lord called His people to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that they have in Him. Look at 1 Peter 3:15-16:

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and

respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (NIV).

Do you know how to tell other people God’s story through your story? Think about it in terms of the guide on the trail. If the guide showed up when you were lost and off the trail, and you had a broken leg and the guide picked you up, healed your leg and had you follow him down the path, wouldn’t you want to tell others what the guide did for you? In the end, what you are doing is sharing the guide’s story and giving him praise for what he did in your life and helping other travelers on the trail recognize they can trust the guide to do the same thing in their life because you know his character. Your story has simply become a bridge to connect their story to the guide’s story.

It may sound intimidating, but it is easy for every person in the group to be able to build out their story of how God has worked in their life. Think about your story in these categories (fill in the blank):

- My life before Christ ...
- When I heard about Christ and what He did, I came to know Him by ...
- My life since trusting in Christ ...
- Right now, the Lord is working in my life through ...

If you can learn to share your story using these pieces, you will be amazed at how the Lord can help others learn to follow Him through you. A few keys to keep in mind:

- When you talk about the time you trusted Christ, talk about the gospel and what it is. Use this as an opportunity to share with them what it means to believe, repent and trust in Jesus Christ.
- Frame your story in light of the bigger picture of God’s story. He is the hero of this story and not you. So share it from that perspective. We want someone contemplating the Lord and honoring Him over us.
- Focus on having a conversation about who God is and what He’s done instead of trying to get all the words right and saying it exactly how you plan to say everything. Trust the Lord that He can work through your willingness to simply step out and tell His story of faithfulness in your life.

Questions:

- Have you ever shared your story of God’s faithfulness with someone else? How did it go? If you have never shared your story, set aside some time this week to try and write it out.
- What makes you nervous about sharing your story? What excites you about sharing your story?
- Name one person you would like to share your story with over the next month.

Team role: It can be very difficult to keep focused on the mission and stay encouraged when the trail becomes difficult or distractions seem more enticing. This is where your small group family comes in. We all need others to help us live on mission. Here are a few ways your small group family can walk together in this leg of the journey:

1. **Build deep roots of community with a focus on multiplication.** This is the idea of intentionally investing in the people in your group so friendships, accountability and confession can take place in a safe space; while at the same time recognizing there are many other people outside your small group family who need the same thing. These two can seem incompatible and build a tension we do not like to hold. But the reality is that Jesus did this with His disciples. He brought them together for a period of time and then He intentionally sent them out to all different places to help others. When we have a clear attachment to the mission, we develop a growing desire for multiplication.
2. **Be accountable to each other for people outside the group.** Intentionally ask each other who the Lord has placed in your lives and encourage one another in the way you invest in these relationships. It is amazing how simply asking each other about the people in their spheres of influence helps to keep a clearer picture of the mission in our minds.
3. **Help each other invest in people.** The good news is that you were not designed to be the only person in someone's life to help them move toward the Lord. If you have a neighbor who is walking through a difficult season and someone in your small group family has gone through a similar situation, introduce them and allow your small group family member to walk with them. The Lord has put a vast assortment of gifts/resources/experiences and personalities in your group. Recognize that every person that is being influenced by someone in your group has all of these gifts/resources/experiences and personalities available to them to help them move toward Christ.

Questions:

- What should it look like to manage the tension of building deep relationships and focusing on multiplication?
- What are some of the gifts/resources/experiences/personalities the Lord has placed in your small group family? How can you see these being used to help others move toward the Lord?

Wrap-up: One of the great joys in life is watching someone the Lord allowed you to play a part in helping learn to love God and love people end up helping someone else love God and love people. When we live on mission like this, we find incredible fulfillment. It is like climbing to the peak of the mountain and looking out over the valley below. It is a breathtaking moment. When we have the privilege of influencing someone else to love God and love people, that breathtaking moment is even greater. You will long for it more and more. In the end, as we do this over and over, we will move toward being a ready bride for the return of Christ and we all long for that day!

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One-on-One Disciple-Making

Some questions to ask when looking for someone to pour into you:

- Who is someone I respect their walk with Christ?
- Is there a particular area I want to grow in? If so, is there someone who seems to be really strong in that area that I can learn from?
- Is this someone who will be open and honest with me?
- Will they hold me accountable?
- Is this person going to be intentional with our time together?
- Do they have a history of helping mentor other people?
- How long am I looking for this mentoring relationship to last? Short-term or long-term? What is the other person's availability?
- Am I looking for someone way ahead of me on the journey or someone one or two steps ahead of me?
- Are there opportunities for our paths to cross regularly?
- Is there someone I already have a relationship with that fits the answers to the questions above?

Some keys when looking for someone to pour into:

- Look around you and see who the Lord has naturally put right in front of you. This can be someone who doesn't know Jesus and the first step is for you to share the gospel with them or it can be someone who already knows Jesus.
- Don't think you need to be an expert. People don't need an expert, they need someone who is available, honest and will point them to Christ.
- It's not about giving advice as much as it is helping someone else learn how to love God and love people.
- Don't be exclusive. If you are walking with someone and they are struggling with something you are not familiar with, connect them with someone else you know who is able to help guide them in that particular area. Utilize the community of believers and don't create a dependence on you.
- It takes time to invest in others, so look for someone who will be faithful, makes the time to be available and is teachable.
- Be proactive and be praying and looking for someone to invest your life in.
- It doesn't have to be a formal agreement. Frequently it starts with one conversation and as the person looking to invest in someone else, invite them to get together again and simply begin to invest in their life as they are willing to allow you to.
- Be patient. The journey of pouring into someone else comes with its ups and downs. Focus on obedience to the Lord and leave the results up to Him.
- Be intentional. Seek to have a purpose in what you're doing while being available for the interruptions of life.

- Don't let fear keep you from investing in someone else. A fear of preparedness or to someone's response can paralyze you from walking in obedience to the Lord. You simply walk in obedience and entrust the results to the Lord.