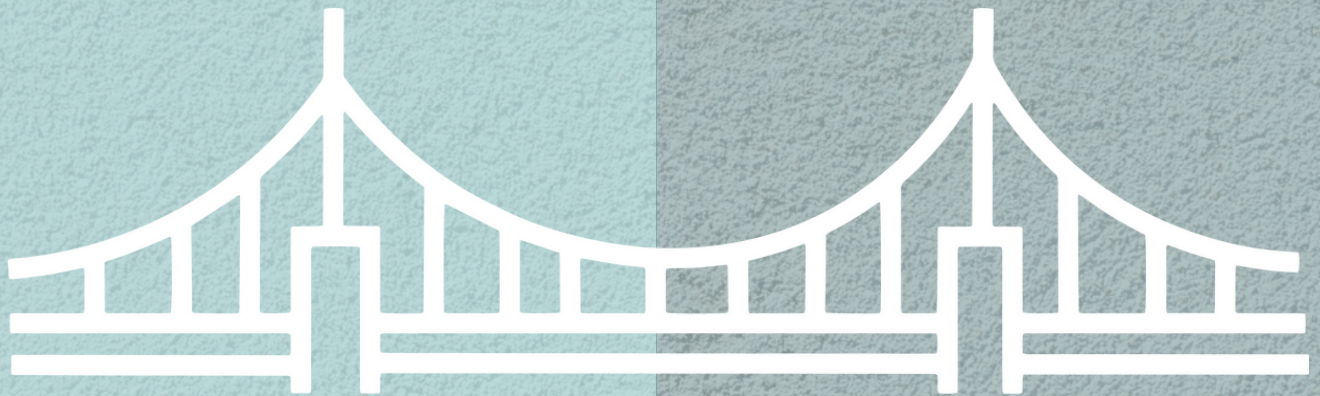


COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY



BUILDING BRIDGES

Intentional outreach where we...

LIVE U WORK U PLAY

“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

SESSION 1 - MISSION AGENTS

God is a sending God who calls His people, the church, to be missionary agents of His love and glory. God's mission has a Church!

Watch or Listen to Podcast #1 at fbcva.org/building-bridges#groups

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 The Great Commandment and the Great Commission give Christ Followers a well-rounded job description. What do they each teach us as they relate to:
 - What are we called to “BE”?
 - What are we called to “DO”?
- 2 Recall what we can learn from the lives of Joseph/Jonah/Daniel/Esther and Peter/Mary Magdalene/Paul/Timothy:
 - What circumstance in life did God use to send them out?
 - To whom were they sent?
 - How did He send them?
 - How were they received?
 - What do we learn about God?
- 3 Recall the story of Israel in exile in Babylon:
 - Why did God send the Israelites into Babylon?
 - How were the Israelites to live in Babylon?
- 4 What is God's Mission? And how will He complete it?

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE WEEK: *“Exegetical Walk”*

This week take an exegetical walk (drive) in your neighborhood as outlined by Simon Carey Holt on the next page. The term Exegetical means to look at something, intentionally to reveal the deepest meanings. We will take time to share our experiences in session 2.

ACTIVITY: *“Ministry Programs”*

- First, list all the programs, trainings, ministries created in mind for those inside the church.
- Second, list all the programs, trainings, ministries created exclusively for those outside the church.
- With these two lists in mind – what do we learn?

An Exegetical Neighborhood Walk

By Simon Carey Holt

The purpose of this exercise is to see your neighborhood in its detail and to respond to what you see both sensitively and critically. It's not one you can rush. Before you go, take some time to think about how you define your neighborhood and how it's physically laid out. Draw yourself a map, including your own home, the basic street patterns, and any landmarks, shops, commercial or community buildings, schools or parks. Be sure to include those boundary markers or natural borders that give your neighborhood definition. It's a very personal thing; no one else can define it for you. The only criteria are that it includes where you live. Once you've got a rough idea in mind of what area to include, set aside 30 minutes to 1 hour of uninterrupted time, grab a notebook and pen and head out.

Here's a list of questions to help you as you go:

1. As you stand just outside your house or apartment by the front gate or on the sidewalk what do you see as you look in each direction? What do you hear or sense? What activity do you notice?
2. As you walk the neighborhood, what do you notice? Who do you see?
3. How would you characterize the people you see? What is their age, race, and gender? What might be their cultural background?
4. What might be the attitudes of those you walk by, where might they spend time, what might they do for fun, what might be the concerns they have, what might be their religious or spiritual tendencies?
5. If you feel led or have the opportunity, engage someone naturally and ask these questions.
6. For the people you pass, what might be some barriers or obstacles for these people to engage faith?
7. What public spaces are provided for children, teenagers, or adults? Are they being used? If so, in what ways?

8. If there is a local park, what do you notice about it? Does it feel like an inviting place? Who is there? How is it used?
9. Do you pass any churches or religious buildings? What does their design or appearance communicate to you? Are they heavily attended, places of life, or historical landmarks?
10. What kinds of commercial buildings are there? Walk around a supermarket or local store and identify who makes up the clientele?
11. If your neighborhood includes a shopping area, is there provision made for people to sit, relax, or relate?
12. Are there places in your neighborhood that you wouldn't go? Why?
13. Where are the places of life, hope, beauty or community in this neighborhood?
14. What evidence of struggle, despair, neglect and alienation do you see?
15. What sense of connection do you feel to your neighborhood as you walk through it?
16. In what ways do you sense God's presence where you live?

Additionally,

- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you go
- Remain in a Spirit of prayer as you walk
- Listen for what might be good news for the people in your neighborhood

*An exercise from Simon Carey Holt, *God Next Door: Spirituality and Mission in the Neighborhood*. Brunswick: Acorn Press, 2007, 103-104.*

SESSION 2 - YOUR SENT AREAS

Individually and collectively as the body of Christ, we are SENT out among the people of the world.

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FROM WEEK 1:

- What moments during your walk/drive stood out to you the most? Did you learn anything new?
- Did you get to interact with people in your neighborhood during your walk/drive? In what way?
- Where did you see God at work during your walk/drive?
- Did God prompt you to pray for your neighbors? In what way?

Watch or Listen to Podcast #2 at fbcva.org/building-bridges#groups

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Recall the passages that displayed how Jesus was “sent”:
 - What was Jesus’ purpose?
 - To whom was He sent?
- 2 Recall the passages that displayed how the Disciples were “sent”:
 - What purposes were the Disciples given? To whom were they sent?
 - Why is it important to know why we are sent and to whom we are sent?
 - What can we do to keep us from falling back into the paradigm of expecting people to come to us?

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE WEEK: *“Calendar Space”*

Open some new space in your calendar. Take a couple of items off your calendar to give the Holy Spirit time to direct you to people in your sent areas. This week, intentionally engage one person from your sent areas. Take a relational step toward this individual or couple or family. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Examples of engagement could be:

- Introducing yourself
- Apologizing to someone for not yet knowing them
- Sharing a meal with someone
- Doing something kind for someone
- Asking more about someone's story

Remember the point is friendship - do the next step in building a mutual friendship.

ACTIVITY: “Spheres of Influence”

Using the “circles” diagram, complete the following:

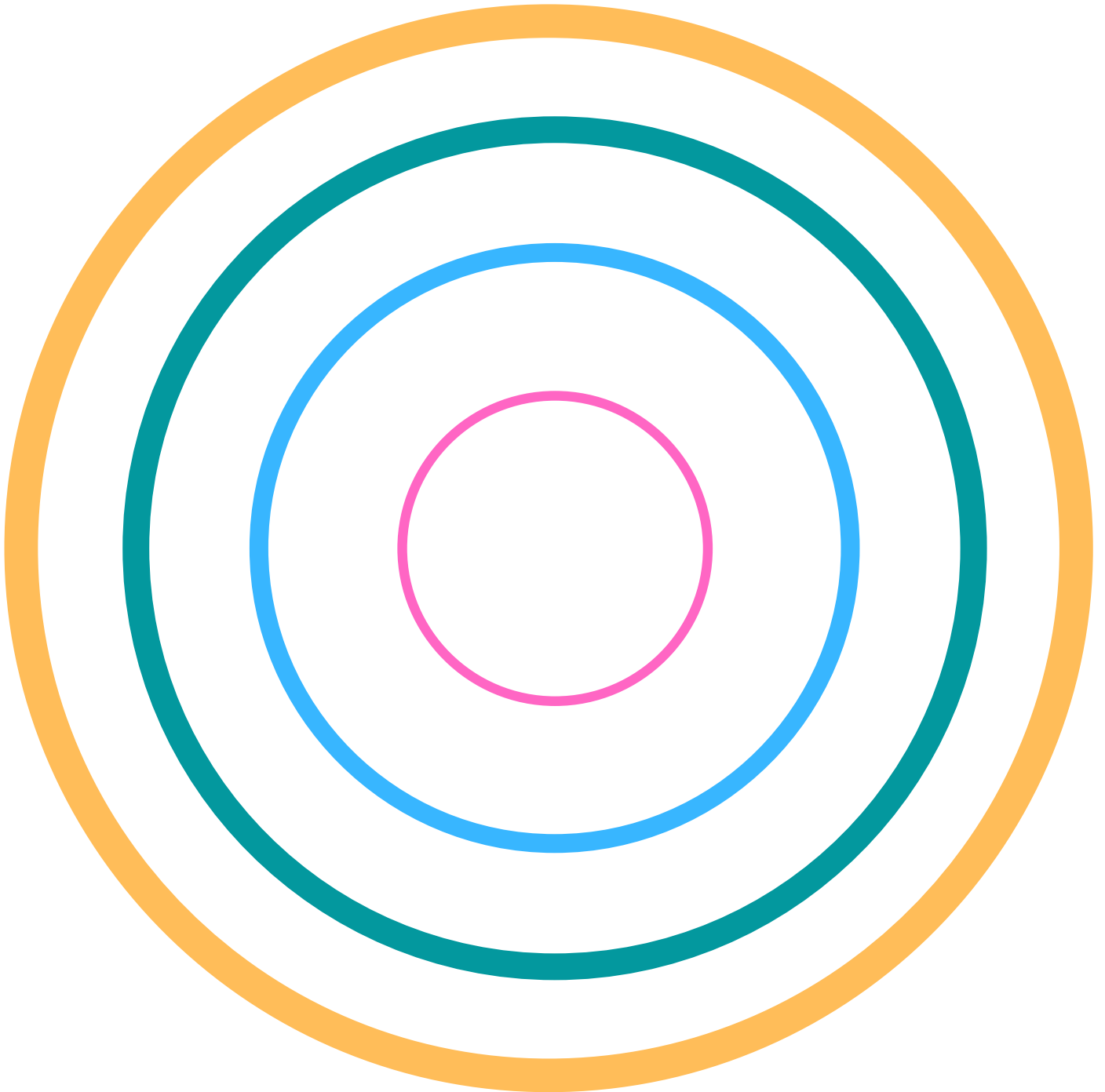
Step 1: Write your name in the middle circle.

Step 2: Write down the names of everyone you know on those circles!

(Start with the people you know best and see most often on closer circles. Then, work your way out and write down names of people you see less often on circles farther out)

- What sphere of influence in your life is God already working? Where is the Spirit leading you?
- Who are the people you already see consistently who are not yet convinced of Jesus’ gift?
- What relationships do you have in the places that you live, work and play?
- To whom and to where do you feel sent?
- To whom and to where do you feel your family has been sent? Is there overlap?

“SPHERES OF INFLUENCE”



SESSION 3 - BELLS, PART 1

Would you like to be a generous, hospitable, Spirit-led, Christ like champion? Bless and Eat!

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FROM WEEK 2:

- What items were you able to remove from your calendar last week?
- How did the Holy Spirit use you to fill that time?

Watch or Listen to Podcast #3 at fbcva.org/building-bridges#groups

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Recall the passage from Colossians 4:
 - How did Paul asks the Colossians to participate in the gospel indirectly and directly?
 - What does it look like to “devote” yourself to prayer?
 - Why do we need to be “alert” in our prayer effort?
 - What does Paul tell us to be praying for in vs 3-4?
- 2 According to vs 5-6, how are we to be directly involved in the gospel? How can that be daily?
- 3

Find some examples of how Jesus “blessed” people He encountered and discuss.

Recall some of the passages where Jesus ate with others. What did He do for those in His company (spiritually, emotionally, socially, and physically)? What can we learn about hospitality and “eating” with those inside and outside the church?

ACTIVITY: *“Scripture Memory”*

- Take the time to memorize Colossians 4:2-6 while you're in the group together!
- Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way that I ought to proclaim it.
- Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Your speech must always be [c]with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE WEEK: *“Bless and Eat”*

“B”: Let's take the opportunity to BLESS at least 3 people this week (and at least one non-church goer)

Blessing usually takes three different forms:

- Words of Affirmation: A note, an email, face to face – a simple word that says I've noticed something worthwhile about you and I need you to know it.
- Acts of Kindness: A blessing that lightens the load – practical support that strengthen their arm – mowing an older lady's yard, watching a young couples' kids for an evening, bringing a meal to a busy family – the list goes on.
- Gifts: A simple gift can show someone that they are known, cared for and valued. Gifts come in all shapes, sizes and price points.

“E”: Let's take the opportunity to EAT with at least 3 people this week (and at least one non-church goer)

This meal can be as simple or elaborate as you would like. It can be coffee, a dinner party, or an afternoon snack. The purpose is to build relationships and look for gospel opportunities.

SESSION 4 - BELLS, PART 2

Would you like to be a generous, hospitable, Spirit-led, Christ like champion? Listen, Learn, Sent

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FROM WEEK 3:

- Share your stories about the 3 people you were able to “Bless” and “Eat” with.
- Was it difficult to accomplish? Why or why not?

Watch or Listen to Podcast #4 at fbcva.org/building-bridges#groups

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 We know the Holy Spirit is our companion, source of strength and an indispensable source of wisdom. What are some ways you can tell that the Holy Spirit is speaking to you? How can the Holy Spirit assist you with your listening skills?
- 2 Share what you have learned about Jesus this past week? This past year? Throughout your life? What would you like to learn more about Jesus?
- 3 Share how you have been on the receiving end of a someone being a Christ-Ambassador that impacted your life. What characteristics did that person display?

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE WEEK: *“Listen, Learn, and Sent”*

“L”: Sit in silence for at least 10 minutes in order to listen for the Holy Spirit to speak to you.

“L”: Pick a night as a group to watch a film or video about Jesus together, and look for ways that you can better learn about Jesus and His life.

Examples:

- The Greatest Story Ever Told – All-star, epic movie that chronicles the life of Jesus Christ - 1965
- The Passion of the Christ – Depicts the final 12 hours of the life of Jesus Christ, written and directed by Mel Gibson - 2004
- The Miracle Maker – A Stop motion animated film about the life of Jesus Christ as seen through the eyes of Tamar, the terminally ill daughter of Jarius. - 1999
- Jesus of Nazareth – A BBC TV mini series from 1977, over 6 hours running time
- The Chosen – a crowd funded mini series depicting the life of Jesus from the view of those around Him.
- The Robe – The life-changing story of a Roman tribune who is responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus
- eyewitnessbible.org – Fascinating behind-the-scenes monologs of the people who are the bedrock of the Christian Faith.

“S”: Begin a journal that allows you to capture those moments of the week where you were able to live out being sent as Christ-Ambassador

ACTIVITY: *“Listening to Others”*

- Divide your group up into pairs.
- Person #1 will share something important to them to Person #2 for 3 minutes.
- Person #2 should listen the entire time and use the listening skills shared in the podcast.
- At the end of the 3 minutes, Person #2 can paraphrase what was said.
- When completed, reverse roles and repeat the process. Then, gather back as a large group and discuss the distinctions of being Person #1 and Person #2.
- What did you learn?