

Serve Together

We reflect God's heart for people when we serve and groups grow when they serve together, that's why Serve Together is one of the Eight Leader Essentials.

The local church should be a positive influence in the community. It should be seen as a gathering of people who step in and make a difference for people in need and people facing challenging circumstances. Groups have a huge role in making the church a positive influence. They do so in getting out and serving their communities as representatives of the church.

Jesus called us to serve others. God wants us to be rich in good deeds towards our communities. In 1 Timothy 6:17 the apostle Paul wrote this to a young pastor he was mentoring he said, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."

Generosity is good for us as individuals and good for us as groups. A group benefits when it expands its focus beyond itself. That's because groups that look outward and seek to help others behave like Jesus did and you can't avoid growing spiritually when you emulate Jesus, it's inevitable.

We want you and your group to serve your local community. We want you to serve those in need or those outside of church by volunteering with a local nonprofit. That way, you're getting most of your investment of time and energy by partnering with the people who already know where need exist and who are doing something tangible to address that need.

We want service to be a consistent part of your group experience. You determine the frequency that you serve, maybe its monthly, maybe it's quarterly, maybe it's a few times a year.

Have some conversations with your group members and figure out the rhythm and cadence of service that works best for you, but just serve. When your group prioritizes serving, it encourages each member to take a next step in their spiritual growth by creating a lifestyle of service. You help your group members become aware of the needs around them and then engage in meeting those needs. You encourage them to love others and that usually requires beginning to see others the way God sees them, as having been created in his image. If you prioritize serving it will increase the overall quality of your group experience. That's because regularly serving together deepens the connections in your group and give you more relational momentum. Shared goals and activities bond us in ways that conversations on their own even vulnerable conversations can't.

But while serving can be fun it's never convenient it won't happen on its own, you have to make it happen and that requires effort and planing. Now some leaders value serving, but they don't have a natural passion for it. They recognize it's important, but it's not the thing that fires them up. If that's you it's okay, consider another leader essential, promote participation. Find a person in your group who is passionate about serving others. Ask that person to begin to gather information in order to help the entire group decide how to serve and when to serve because that person will be energized by the task of organizing a service project, he or she will probably do a better job than you would have. That will create a better experience for the entire group, especially group members who maybe hesitant to serve. **So ask yourself, "Is serving a consistent part of our group experience?"**

Commit to making it happen and maintaining a pattern of service throughout your time together. Create a plan for service. No matter how often you choose to serve together it will change you, your group, and the community around you for the better.