

WEEK 1: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Our theme for this year's *Prosper the City* campaign is "Love Your Neighborhood". Your group will take three weeks to plan a service project on the fourth week so someone who lives in your neighborhood can experience Jesus.

ITEMS NEEDED

- Bibles
- Printed Discussion Guides
- T-Shirt sheet
- Pens
- Adhesive Easel Pad
- Markers
- Sticky Notes

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

- Pray for your group
- Read through the Discussion Guide
- Refreshments (optional)
- Clean meeting area
- Clean bathroom
- Crack front door

OPENING (5 MIN)

After a general welcome, say: Okay, friends, like always, let's get started with an icebreaker—

DESCRIBE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD GROWING UP—WHERE WAS IT AND WHAT DID SOCIAL LIFE LOOK LIKE?

After a brief discussion, say: What makes every neighborhood special isn't so much the streets or houses, it's the people who live there. Not surprising then, neighborhoods are an incredible opportunity for the church to prosper the city and help people experience Jesus.

But before we get into a conversation about all of that, let's pray.

OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

Host, lead the group in prayer.

THE NEIGHBORLY STRANGER (10-15 MIN)

After a prayer, say: Before we get into today's discussion, let's give Jesus an opportunity to speak on the matter. These are familiar words for many of us, but it's always good to revisit God's timeless truth.

CAN SOMEONE READ LUKE 10:29-37 ALOUD FOR US?

After the reading, say: The man asked Jesus "Who is my neighbor?" and Jesus finishes his parable with a twist on his question by asking, "Who was a neighbor?"

WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK JESUS IS TRYING TO MAKE IN REPHRASING HIS QUESTION TO TURN "NEIGHBOR" FROM A NOUN TO A VERB?

LET'S LIST THE THINGS THE SAMARITAN SACRIFICED FOR THE WOUNDED MAN.

HOW DO THESE CONCEPTS INFLUENCE OUR PROSPER THE CITY PROJECT?

After a discussion, say: The parable takes on special significance when we realize Jesus—the storyteller—was describing himself! HE is the Good Samaritan, who looked on us in our helpless state and sacrificed everything for us to save us. In response, we have a heart of gratitude that longs to serve our neighbor just as Christ first served us!

NAME THE NEIGHBOR (15-20 MIN)

Over the years, some of the most memorable *Prosper the City* projects have been the ones that serve our neighbors in need. Collections and fundraisers are great, but there's something about building a wheelchair ramp, drywalling walls, or cleaning a yard that touches people in a lasting and meaningful ways. That's why, this year, our theme for Prosper the City is "Love Your Neighborhood".

Host, get out the adhesive easel pad and a marker.

LET'S BRAINSTORM SOME OF THE COMMON PROBLEMS WE SEE IN OUR ACTUAL NEIGHBORHOODS. THEY CAN BE BIG OR SMALL. I'LL WRITE YOUR ANSWERS ON THIS EASEL PAD SHEET.

Host, write your group's answers on the adhesive easel pad.

After your group has had time to brainstorm some answers, take out another sheet from the adhesive easel pad.

NOW LET'S EACH BRAINSTORM SOME ACTUAL PEOPLE IN OUR LITERAL NEIGHBORHOODS WHO MIGHT BE DEALING WITH SOME OF THESE PROBLEMS RIGHT NOW. I'LL WRITE YOUR ANSWERS ON THIS NEW SHEET. (IF YOU DON'T KNOW THEIR NAME, YOU CAN JUST SAY SOMETHING DESCRIPTIVE LIKE "THE FAMILY THAT LIVES ACROSS THE STREET FROM ME".)

Host, write your group's answers on the second adhesive easel pad. Before moving on, say:

HAS EVERYONE HERE SHARED A NAME OR TWO? WE ALL KNOW A NEIGHBOR!**NAME THE SOLUTION (15-20 MIN)**

After a discussion, say: Okay, now we need to connect the dots. It's one thing to see the need, it's quite another to see the solution.

Host, take out a stack of sticky notes.

LET'S BRAINSTORM WHAT IT IS EACH OF THE NEIGHBORS WE DISCUSSED ACTUALLY NEED. WHAT'S THE SOLUTION? I'LL WRITE YOUR ANSWERS ON A STICKY NOTE AND PUT IT NEXT TO EACH NAME.

After a discussion, say: Great start, everyone! I'll save these sheets for next week, when we get into selecting a neighbor and planning what we can do for them as a group. This week, our

purpose was to first take in the big picture and let God's Spirit start to marinate something within us.

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRAYER (5 – 7 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Before we get to our prayers, though, two announcements:

- *If you signed up for you group to sponsor a prayerwalk this summer (thank you!) tell the group the date and location the prayerwalk. If you weren't able to sign up for a prayerwalk, ask your group which Wednesday in June or July your group can make sure to attend.*
- Second, we have a T-shirt sheet I need to send back to the church so we can all have *Prosper the City* t-shirts for our project. This is the same shirt as previous years, so only request a shirt if you don't have one yet.

Pass around the T-shirt sheet for the group to fill out.

Let's close things out with prayer—

ARE THERE ANY PRAYER REQUESTS TODAY?

Host, begin with a prayer saying,

"Dear God, forgive us for the times we've failed to be the neighbor you want us to be. Thank you for your Son, who was a neighbor for us. Help us to respond to his love by loving our neighborhood. Would you lead our group, Lord, to select the right neighbor you want us to serve?"

In addition, Lord, we also pray for..." *[Continue with this week's prayer requests.]*

