

MISSIONAL GATHERING PLANNING GUIDE

The following guide will help your community group plan and execute a missional gathering. *Missional gatherings are intentionally hosting, helping, or hanging out together with people far from God.* You can find a full description of missional gatherings and frequently asked questions in the Community Group Handbook on pages 61-66. To help your group plan out their next missional gathering, take time during your family meal to work through the following:

STEP 1: DEBRIEF

Goal: Learn from previous missional gatherings

If your group has already done a missional gathering before, take 5 minutes to work through the following questions to help you debrief before you begin planning another gathering:

- What wins we can celebrate from our last missional gathering?
- What could we have executed better? What could we have done to be better prepared?
- How did the gathering help us engage the “three strands” of mission: building relationships with others, sharing the gospel with others, and introducing others to community?
- Is there anything we can learn from that gathering to apply to future gatherings?
- Most importantly, were any lost people present at this gathering?

STEP 2: BRAINSTORM

Goal: Come up with two or three potential ideas

Take up to 15 minutes to brainstorm how your group can gather for the sake of people far from God. Don't worry about all the details at this point. Simply make it a goal to get two or three good ideas you can do in the next three months. Consider the different types of missional gatherings. You could **host** a gathering to show gospel hospitality to your non-Christian friends and neighbors. You could **help** those far from God by meeting a need in your neighborhood. You could **hang out** in the city to build friendships with those who don't follow Jesus.

Designate someone to write out ideas. If you already have immediate ideas, feel free to jump in and share. If you need help, use the following questions to get you started:

- Are there any significant holidays, events, or moments coming up in the cultural calendar? (e.g., Halloween, Easter, Back-to-School, sporting events)

For **hosting** ideas, be sure to ask:

- When and where could we host this gathering?
- Who could you invite? Who lives nearby? Would your three be interested in coming?
- What could you serve? What does your group have to offer?

For **helping** ideas, be sure to ask:

- Who could we reach out to and offer our support? Neighbors? Schools? Non-Profits?
- How can our group reasonably meet a need for this person or group?
- Would we need everyone to pitch in? If not, how could others in the group be involved?

For **hanging out** ideas, be sure to ask:

- Where do people in our city already gather and spend time naturally?
- How could we gather in that place as a group in a way that opens gospel doorways?
- Who could we invite to join us as we hang out in the city?

- What is everyone in the group already involved in which the rest of the group could join in?
- Are there any ideas from previous planning sessions that we could do this time around?
- Are there any new needs or opportunities that have arisen since our last missional gathering?

STEP 3: COMMIT

Goal: Decide on your next missional gathering

Once you have a few potential ideas for your next missional gathering, take about 5 minutes to briefly review all those ideas. Then, together, agree which one your group will do, and commit to do it. To help you decide, consider the following questions:

- Where is the energy moving toward in this conversation? Which ideas have garnered the most excitement and buy-in?
- What kind of gathering have we done in the past, and is it time to do something different?
- Which ideas could be reasonably executed by our group in this season of life?

Don't overthink it. If your group feels stuck here, it is better to choose something than to leave it here at this stage. Just do something.

Save the rest of your ideas for future missional gatherings.

STEP 4: PLAN

Goal: Come up with clear action steps, due dates, and point people

Put your plans into action. Don't leave without clear next steps. These steps may include contacting key people, communicating with the group, buying supplies, or performing research. Take up to 10 minutes to work through the following questions to help you develop a plan:

- What exactly do we need to do to accomplish this missional gathering?
- Who is responsible for each part of the event? Who will run point and drive communication as a whole?
- When is the due date for each action item?
- Can we set a date and time for the missional gathering right now? If not, what do we need to do to get that scheduled?
- Do we need a Push Back Darkness Grant?

Push Back Darkness Grants are available when financial assistance is needed to serve the city or host an event. For more information, or to apply for a Push Back Darkness Grant, go to

STEP 5: PRAY

Goal: Pray for missional impact on those far from God

Spend about 5 minutes asking for God's favor and grace on this missional gathering. In particular, pray that more and more people would come to know and follow Jesus through your group. Pray specifically for people far from God who could experience gospel community and hear the good news of Jesus through this upcoming gathering.

STEP 6: FOLLOW UP

Goal: Make missional gatherings a regular habit for your group

After you complete the missional gathering you planned here, schedule a family meal to strategically work through this guide again, where you can debrief and plan your next missional gathering. Follow-up is essential to making missional gatherings a regular and meaningful rhythm of your community group.