

I ♥ MY CITY

Week Two

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for our group. Help us to connect with you and one another while we are here today. Amen.

Talk it Over

This week we continued our annual series, "I Heart (*insert your city name here*)". This series is all about being intentional in loving our city and being for our city.

- Do you know any fun facts about your city? Any interesting pieces of information? If no one has any fun facts on the top of their head, have someone grab a phone and Google "fun facts about (*insert your city name here*)".

Read Series Theme Verse John 1:14 (MSG)

So many of the Jesus stories in the Bible center on Jesus showing up and making the space he was in better. Jesus was sent to show the world what love looks like and he did that everywhere he went. Along these same lines, if we consider ourselves to be followers of Jesus, just like Jesus, we are also sent people, to bless people, where we live, work, and play.

- In your own words, what does it mean to bless people?
- Were you raised in a home that valued blessing others? If so, where did this value come from and what do you remember seeing modeled? If not, what do you think kept blessing others from being a value in your home?

Read Matthew 22:36-40 (NIV)

During this series, we are looking at the questions: What if every church blessed every city and what if every Christian blessed every neighbor? These questions matter because we know Jesus deemed loving our neighbor as the second most important thing we can do. Furthermore, it's safe to assume that being a loving church community won't work if we aren't loving people well on a personal level.

- Tell us about a time you saw a group of individuals come together to do something good for someone.

This week we also revisited the B.L.E.S.S. practice. This practice is about five simple rhythms that foster friendship and hopefully enable us to share Jesus in the context of a genuine, loving relationship. Let's review the five rhythms now.

B: Being in prayer. Blessing others isn't about forcing our way onto people but rather us aligning our hearts with God and us wanting God's best to prevail in the life of others.

L: Listen. Listening is about genuinely getting to know others.

E: Eat. Eating with others is a spiritual practice that helps foster love, respect, trust, and mutual friendship.

S: Serve them. Serving others comes naturally when you care about them.

S: Story. Once friendship is established we earn the right to share our Jesus story and the Jesus story.

This week we are focusing on the "L" and the "E" of B.L.E.S.S.

(Content continued on the next page.)

Read Luke 18:35-42 (NLT)

A key to the B.L.E.S.S. strategy is listening well to others and being able to know what is really happening in people's lives. To help us listen well, we looked at the action step of being interruptible. We see this in Jesus stories, including the one we just looked at here in Luke 18. Jesus had a plan, but he was willing to get interrupted and personal with the one person who needed him.

- How do you define a good listener?
- Tell us about a recent time someone listened to you well.
- How inclined are you to be aware of what is happening with the people around you? In other words, by nature, are you more closed off to others or are you quick to be aware of how others are doing?
- Would the people you live with say you are interruptible? Would the people you work with say you're interruptible? How about the people you play with?
- When are you most able and willing to listen and engage with the people right in front of you?
- When is it hardest for you to listen to others? What most often keeps you from listening well?

Read Matthew 9:9-13 (NLT)

Another key to the B.L.E.S.S. strategy is eating with others and using that time to be with them. In fact, part of the way Jesus saved the world was by going to parties and eating with people. At these gatherings, it wasn't uncommon for Jesus to connect with people others deemed far from God, people others considered unworthy of his attention, people who were very different than Jesus, and those marginalized. To help us live this out well, we looked at the action step of being intentional.

- Tell us about a time someone went out their way to connect with you over a meal?
- How comfortable or uncomfortable are you with the idea of sharing a meal with someone in the hopes of connecting? Why is this the case?
- Can you think of anyone in your life currently you might want to invite out or over for a meal? What good might come from you being intentional to connect with this person?

This series ends with our big serve weekend taking place. On serve weekend, we are essentially going to close the doors to the church, mobilize thousands of volunteers through service projects, and be the church in our community.

- Has everyone in this group signed up for a project? Is there a project for us to serve together in? To see a list of projects, visit iheartcv.com or your church specific sign-up portal. For questions, email serve@eastlakechurch.com.

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for the good things you are looking to do in our city. Help us to partner with what you are doing; help us to be present with the people around us, aware of their needs, and ready to help. We want to live as sent people to bless people where we live, work, and play. Amen.

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.