

THE SHARING GROUP

VISION

To become a community that grows in our love for God and people by sharing our money, by faith, with people who are struggling with poverty locally and around the world.

"In everything I did, I showed you that we must work hard and help the weak. We must remember the words of the Lord Jesus. He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " Acts 20:35

PHILOSOPHY

- We believe that everything we have comes from and belongs to God (Job 1:21).
- We commit to sharing our lives and resources with a Christian community.
- We seek to learn ways to live simple, generous, joyful, compassionate and sacrificial lives together.
- We desire to extend ourselves in practical expressions of loving relationship with people who are in need, especially other believers. (Galatians 6:10)
- We desire to give in way that does not increase our power over this person.
- We desire to give in a way that affirms the person and builds the relationship (for example, visiting them or writing a card).
- We commit to making decisions about how to share our resources prayerfully with our community.
- We trust in the integrity of each participant to make decisions.
- We commit to teaching and modeling how to share our resources with those in our community who have less experience in it.

VALUES

- *Compassion* for people in need and knowledge of their specific needs
- *Awareness* of what individuals and organizations are doing in the US and around the world and how we can plan a role in their development as they are on the front lines of helping people.
- *Leadership* development as decision-makers present verbal proposals to the others in the group.
- *Spiritual growth* as we practice prayer, discernment, discretion, wisdom and insight.
- *Submission* to each other in *community* as individuals take time to consult with their decision-maker team. Meeting together is part of the process of *discipleship*. Let's not miss it!
- Growing in *faith* as we learn to say yes and no to the needs that we will be confronted with.
- Over time, growing in *relationship* with the people we share resources with.

STRUCTURE

Joining the Sharing Group:

- Participants are invited into the group through word of mouth, not public advertising.
- The group is predicated a high level of trust between those who participate.
- Each person who participates agrees to a time length of commitment that they are most comfortable with. For example, a person can make a six month commitment and evaluate this and, if they so choose, make another six month commitment. A suggested minimum time commitment will be three months.

Being a Participant:

- Initially, a group of like-minded people will gather for a meeting to affirm a common commitment to this adventure in sharing. The group will set the primary structure of the group: When and where it will meet, minimum contribution amounts and other basic foundations.
- The whole sharing group will meet once a month (possibly over a meal together) to:
 - Discuss the delicate issues which are surfacing in our spiritual growth as a result of this faith venture.
 - Hear reports from the decision-makers about people and communities in need that we have been given the privilege of sharing with.
 - Educate each other about potential individuals and organizations for us to share with.
 - Study scriptures about money, giving and community.
 - Provide encouragement and feedback to the monthly decision-makers.
- Three participants from the large group will meet together each month to make decisions on how to give to people in need through relationships. Each month, a new group of three will serve in the decision-making role and will report the decisions back to the whole group. Groups of 3 can begin to talk earlier than the month they are scheduled to make a decision.
- Each person needs to think about WHO and WHAT in preparation for the month they are going to steward. Since giving is primarily relational, each participant will need to be aware of the particular financial needs and will need to direct this information to the group.
- The larger Sharing Group which meets monthly will have a way of suggesting potential individuals and needs to the deciding teams.
- Participants will need to commit to working through issues that arise in the process with others (for example, providing guidance and support).

Sharing our Money:

- The focus of giving will be on sharing with people in need locally, nationally and globally. We will emphasize sharing with people struggling with poverty, especially in our local area.
- Resources will be shared through relationships. We will give to a person that someone in the group knows. That individual may or may not be connected to an organization.

- A minimum amount will be required to participate in the group but this will be set by the group. The amount will be low enough to allow people with different levels of income to participate. A suggested minimum level of giving is \$30.00 a month. A suggested maximum level is \$100.00 a month.
- Each participant has an equal voice in decision-making no matter at what financial level they are able to give.
- Funds will be collected once a month in cash.
- Money will be given to people through money orders when possible.
- No checking account will be set up for this project initially.
- No receipts will be given for donations and no tax exemption provided.
- All funds provided in the previous month can be spent in the current month. For example, if the Sharing Group gives \$500.00 in June, three selected participants can distribute \$500.00 in July.
- A treasurer will be needed to keep the money and an accountability system set up in the monthly reports. Receipts from money orders and/or written statements from those who distributed the money will be a part of the report each month. The vast majority of the monthly reporting will be verbal sharing except for written financial records of where the money was provided.
- Initially, no funds will be provided to any individuals inside the sharing group but this can be reviewed after we get things off the ground.
- The sharing group will only accept money from people committed to being involved each month and not from outsiders who do not commit to monthly involvement.

QUESTIONS

- How will we identify ourselves when we give the money?
 - One benefit of giving money together is that a personal relationship with someone in need can be protected as the gift came from a group.
- What is our ability to give to people who receive services from Good Works?
 - We need to honor Good Works relationships and structures.

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. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. – I Timothy 6:17-19