

Project SERVE: When Do You Serve?

Large Group Talk 3

Objective: The goal of this lesson is to expand the notion of serving beyond convenience, duty, and comfort. Jesus invites us to lend others a hand at all times. Often, unplanned opportunities of service are the moments when we can have the greatest impact. Jesus modeled this by choosing to serve on the Sabbath, by healing people (working) on the holy day of rest. Although Jesus still found times to rest and be alone with the Father, he was always vigilant and compassionate towards others who needed help, no matter the inconvenience to him.

Recap of Who Do You Serve?

Say Something Like: *In the previous lesson, we discussed who followers of Christ are called to serve: everyone, including the least, the lost, and our enemies. Serving goes beyond our friendship circles and our comfort zones because all people are valuable to God and should, therefore, be valuable to us. Just as Jesus modeled a life of service for others through his generous love for those he encountered, we should go out of our way to help and encourage those we would naturally avoid.*

Introduction

Ask: What was the last major interruption or inconvenience you experienced? How did you react to it?

Say Something Like: *It's safe to say that no one enjoys being interrupted. After all, that's what makes it an interruption—it stops us from doing the things we'd rather be doing. Maybe you're having a conversation and the person you're talking to gets a phone call. Or perhaps you're watching your favorite show, and just when things are getting good, it cuts to a commercial. Or maybe you're trying to count something, but you hear someone say a different number and it forces you to start over. Even when the interruption is a positive thing, it can still be frustrating. Yet in the passage we're about to look at, you'll see that Jesus deals with interruptions a bit differently.*

Read Luke 13:10–17

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

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Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."

The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

Say Something Like: *What was Jesus doing in the synagogue? Teaching! In Jesus' culture, this was a very important time, and his listeners would be hanging on every word he said, eagerly following along and remembering every detail of this lesson. Right in the middle of his sermon, Jesus saw a woman in the crowd who had suffered for a long time. He immediately cut his talk short and asked her to come up to him. He interrupted himself! In order to serve someone right in front of him, Jesus stopped what he was doing and focused on her needs.*

Illustration Option 1: The Interruption Game. In the "Interruption Game," one student begins by standing up and introducing him or herself to the group, sharing about their age, grade, school, interests, and other traits. The moment one of the other students has something in common with the speaker, they stand up, interrupt the speaker, and begin introducing themselves. The interruptions continue until everyone in the room has had a chance to speak. If your group is too large to have everyone participate, simply interrupt whoever is talking to end the game.

Illustration Option 2: Cell Phone Interruption Video. Show this funny clip of a classical violin concert interrupted by a cell phone, and how the musician responds: (youtu.be/uub0z8wJfhU).

Say Something Like: *We can either let interruptions bother us, or we can turn them into opportunities for something amazing to happen. When it comes to serving others, Jesus gives us a picture of how we are to view our time. If we ask the question, When should we serve? Jesus gives a pretty clear answer: any time and every time! Jesus allows for interruptions, initiates when he sees a need, and invites others to experience freedom. We'll unpack this passage a bit more and discover when we should serve.*

Teaching: When Do You Serve?

1. Allow for Interruptions.

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Say Something Like: *In the passage we just read, Jesus stopped his teaching and called the woman forward to him. Imagine this: she's crippled and bent over, so her approach to Jesus must have been painfully slow. Everyone would have been looking at her, wondering what would happen next. The Bible doesn't record what Jesus was actually teaching about, but it does record the interruption of the teaching! We often think that what we're doing at the moment is the most important thing in the world, but Jesus was willing to interrupt what he was doing for the sake of others. It's not that Jesus went around hoping for interruptions, but he certainly was open to them when they happened. We shouldn't let our schedules get so full or think so highly of whatever we're doing that we can't allow for an interruption of service.*

Illustration: Have you ever been watching TV, when your show suddenly cuts out and a news broadcast takes over? Maybe a news anchor will say something like "Breaking news . . ." or "This just in . . ." followed by a description of some major event that has just taken place or is currently happening. Or a weatherperson appears onscreen in front of a map with lines and colors indicating a storm or tornado or hurricane. Our first reaction to these interruptions of our "regularly scheduled programs" may be frustration or impatience, but if we aren't open to them, we might find ourselves in real danger. Can you imagine changing the channel or popping in a movie when the newscaster is talking about an escaped convict hiding in your neighborhood or when a meteorologist is predicting a tornado coming straight for your neighborhood? Some interruptions are worth embracing.

Say Something Like: *The synagogue leader believed that serving was only allowed on special days and at specific times. In his mind, service opportunities were interruptions to the natural order of his schedule. Jesus, on the other hand, served right then and there, even though it wasn't what he had planned to do. In our own lives, we cannot let ourselves become so busy (even when we're doing good things) that we miss what Jesus might be calling us to do in the moment.*

2. Initiate When You See a Need.

Say Something Like: *When Jesus notices the woman hunched over, he doesn't wait for her to ask him for help (so much for "Jesus only helps those who help themselves"). Nor does he ask for permission from the audience listening to his teaching: "Sorry, but do you mind if I pause my lesson for a bit to take care of something? It'll only take a minute." He certainly doesn't care much about what the synagogue leaders think about him. He just calls her forward to receive healing, regardless of whether or not the timing seems right. He doesn't wait to be asked; he just goes for it!*

Illustration: Here's a commercial for a Thai insurance company. It shows a man taking the initiative to serve others in many different facets of life. He never waits

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for someone to ask for his help (until some of the people he serves begin demanding it selfishly). There are many moments when this man could have become frustrated, given up, or decided that he would only help if he saw that others appreciated it. But by the end of the commercial, it's obvious that all of his service was worth the effort: (www.youtube.com/watch?v=-otXGxn15c0).

(A few things to note about this video: Make sure students don't get the impression that they should serve because of the good things they might receive—good emotions, friendships, or other things—but because of Christ's example. Often, we won't get to see the results of our acts of service like this man. The key is that he was open to service at all points, even without receiving the appreciation of others. Also note that there is also a brief indication that this man is following a religion other than Christianity.)

Say Something Like: *So often we can sit on the sidelines and wait for a service opportunity to come our way. Maybe we wait for our parents to ask, or for our youth pastor to set up a mission or service trip, or for a teacher to force us to do "service hours" for a school assignment. Instead, take the initiative. Go beyond scheduled times of service. Serve whenever and wherever you see a need. That can be as simple as throwing away someone else's trash, carrying someone's groceries to their car, or sitting down to talk with someone who seems lonely.*

3. Invite Others to Experience Freedom.

Say Something Like: *When the synagogue ruler corrects him, Jesus points out the leader's hypocrisy. Serving their animals was allowed on the Sabbath, but serving people wasn't! The Sabbath was a day of rest meant to bring restoration and freedom for the people. It was supposed to remind them that God was in control and that they could trust him with their daily needs. The crippled woman had a clear need: she couldn't walk and experienced deep pain. Her crippled state would have made social situations difficult, probably leaving this woman alone to beg for help from others. When Jesus heals her, he doesn't just address her physical needs—he addresses her spiritual, relational, and emotional needs too! Then he corrects the synagogue ruler, inviting others to experience the same kind of freedom.*

Illustration: You may have heard the phrase "pay it forward" or seen the movie about the same idea. It's about a middle school boy who launches a movement of good will towards others. The basic idea is that, for every kind act you receive, you "pay it forward" to someone else. This chain of service starts a ripple effect that can impact your community, city, and ultimately the world. Here's a video demonstrating the concept of "pay it forward": (www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJeWFoKZ63U).

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Say Something Like: *When we serve others, we are not only doing a kind deed—we are inviting them to be a part of the life of service Jesus models. We are finding ways to free them from burden so they can experience joy and freedom. It wasn't only the crippled woman whose life and perspective were changed; all the people in the synagogue were "delighted with all the wonderful things [Jesus] was doing." Even the cynical religious leaders were taught an important lesson about service at all times. Jesus' act of healing didn't affect just the woman; it affected everyone! True Christ-like service goes beyond random acts of kindness. It has domino effects throughout a whole community. In fact, when we start to serve in this way, it can become a picture of heaven on earth. Our service goes beyond just being nice and becomes a picture for what it looks like to be in an eternal relationship with Jesus.*

Putting It All Together:

Say Something Like: *Like I said at the beginning of this lesson, when we ask the question, When should we serve?, the answer Jesus reveals to us is this: any time and every time, especially when it's least expected. We cannot just wait for someone to come ask us for help, or to sign up for a service opportunity at church or school. Jesus invites us into a complete lifestyle of serving others, allowing for interruptions in our busy schedules so we can bless and serve and bring freedom to the people we encounter. And it turns out that when we serve and invite others to experience freedom, we experience it ourselves! The joy and satisfaction of serving people far outweighs any inconvenience in our schedules. We serve others because Jesus served us.*

Question 1: How can you make changes to your schedule that will open yourself to more service opportunities (especially the spontaneous ones)?

Question 2: Where are some ordinary, everyday places you could begin to serve? Think of the moments that happen day after day after day, not just the "special" times where serving is expected.

Looking Forward: Let the students know that the next lesson will look at the question, How does Jesus call us to serve? Be sure to give them any instructions they might need to go from here.

*LeaderTreks recommends watching all video clips and websites in this lesson before showing them to students. These links are optional and not required in order to lead an effective large group talk. Websites often change, and links may not always have the same result. LeaderTreks will do its best to keep them updated and fresh; however, in the event that they do not function properly, we cannot retain responsibility.

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