

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
UNIT 3: A DISCIPLE EMBRACES CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
LESSON 30: DISCIPLES MEET
EACH OTHER'S NEEDS

What we want students to learn: That embracing Christian community means being willing to meet the needs, both physical and spiritual, of fellow Christ-followers.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To identify people within their Christian community who have needs, either physical or spiritual, and come up with a plan to help meet them.

Scripture Focus: Acts 4:34-37

Supporting Scripture: Acts 2:45; Galatians 6:2; James 5:16

Overview: It's not easy to admit when we need something. Yet the picture of the New Testament church was a group of Christ-followers so closely knit that they knew each other's needs and selflessly met them. And this didn't just include physical needs. It was spiritual needs, too. As Christians seeking to follow Christ in discipleship, the expectation is the same for your students. They are called to meet the needs, both physical and spiritual, of their friends in their community. That doesn't just happen. It takes intentionality. And so this lesson will help students identify who needs help and what they are going to do to take action.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **LIFE** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **LIFE** lesson 30 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 30, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Acts has long been held to be a letter from Luke, a Gentile physician, to a man named Theophilus, possibly a benefactor of some sort.
- **Time frame:** There is some debate over when Acts was written. The suggested dates are between 70 AD and 80 AD.

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- **Purpose:** The Book of Acts is a second letter to Theophilus that tells the story of the early Church following Jesus' resurrection. The book begins with Jesus' ascension and His command of His followers to proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The rest of the book traces this journey as the early church leaders proclaim the Gospel and plant churches.

THE SETTING

In this passage, Luke revisits the nature of the budding community of Christians in Jerusalem. As he mentioned in Acts 2:45, these Christians sought to live in the purest fellowship with one another. Sacrificing their own desires and material possessions, they gave all they had to serve the greater good of the community. The growing Jerusalem church was the result of the evangelistic efforts of the disciples following the miraculous events of Pentecost. As their Gospel message spread throughout the city, new believers were converted to Christianity in astonishing numbers. The resulting body of believers passionately adhered to the teachings of Christ and worked hard to spread the good news of Jesus by living out His example.

THE MAIN POINT

The church depicted in Acts believed strongly in personal sacrifice for the good of the community. There was no division among them as they were "of one heart and soul" (v.32). As we study this section of Scripture, we'll see that there are no material possessions that are more important than the bonds of fellowship. Christian community runs deeper than societal status or dollar values. As a body of believers in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit unifies us. This unity leads us to sacrificial love and intentional community.

LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To have students begin discussing sacrificial community and what it might look like in today's world.
- **Set Up:** You'll need a way to show the group two short YouTube videos. Preview and arrange to display the following clips:
 - o Clip 1: <https://youtu.be/pPjYhPGkhGA>
 - o Clip 2: <https://youtu.be/1OCmZuUVZfA>

FIRST, begin by explaining to the students that over the past few weeks you've talked about what "community" really means in a Christian context. Start this lesson by rereading or having a student reread Acts 2:45. You and your students will probably remember this passage from our lesson a few weeks ago. After reading the verse aloud, say something like:

- **We read this verse a few weeks ago when we talked about what Christian community means. As we continue this study, keep this verse in mind as a picture of Christians living in perfect community.**

THEN, explain to the students that you're going to dig a little deeper into what it really looks like to give in order to meet the needs of others. Share with them the basic plot of the movie *The Blind Side*. It's based on the true story of NFL star Michael Oher, who at one time was a homeless teenager that was taken in by a wealthy family, the Tuohys. As the

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story progresses, Michael is adopted as one of their own and given everything he needed to succeed.

NEXT, after explaining the basic plot of the movie to your students, show them a few clips from the movie to help them understand better. Clip 1 shows the first time Michael Oher is invited into the Tuohys home when they find out he has nowhere else to go. Clip 2 shows the change in Leanne Tuohy's high society life as she realizes that her character, world, and values are being completely reordered by this sacrificial relationship she's entered into with Michael.

THEN, have a discussion with your students about the type of giving depicted in this movie. You aren't looking for right or wrong answers here, just get the ball rolling with a discussion. Ask a few of the following questions to kick-start your discussion:

- **Why do you think Leanne Tuohy invited Michael into her family?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Do you think it was easy for the Tuohys to have a complete stranger come into their home? Do you think it was easy for Michael to accept?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **How does this story challenge our traditional thoughts on wealth and giving?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Would the story have been as powerful if the Tuohys had just given Michael money? How did their actions affect Michael's life?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What do you think Leanne meant when she said that Michael was changing her life?**
 - Answers will vary.

NEXT, challenge your students to imagine what they would do if they were in that situations. Ask questions like:

- **If you saw someone like Michael walking down the road, what do you think you would do? Or what would you want your family to do?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Do you think you could treat someone like the Tuohys treated Michael? Or do you think you could ever feel comfortable living as a part of someone else's family, like Michael lived with the Tuohys? Why or why not?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Do you think that you have to be as rich as the Tuohys to give in a way that changes someone's life?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, transition into *The Main Event* by wrapping up your discussion with some concluding thoughts about giving and community living. Say something like:

- **The actions of Leanne Tuohy and her family in the movie *The Blind Side* are certainly generous, but they gave out of an abundance, and they only gave a portion of their wealth. The Christians that we're studying today gave all that they had. The wealthy, the poor, and the in-between came together to meet each other's needs in a way that makes no sense to our 21st Century ideas! But in this community of believers we see a very active faith and a strong obedience to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. As we study today's scripture, think about what it would mean to give all you have for your brothers and sisters in Christ.**

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Transition into *The Main Event* portion of the lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To consider the selfless actions of the Jerusalem church and the depths of their Christian unity.
- **Set Up:** You may benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not essential. You'll want to make sure students have a Bible or a Bible app.

FIRST, have students turn to Acts 4. While they are finding it, provide the context for the passage using the Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read Acts 4:34-37. Ask something like:

- **Who sold their lands and homes?**
 - Answer: Everyone who owned them.
- **Who was in need?**
 - Answer: No one! And when there was someone in need, they took care of them.
- **Why were they doing this?**
 - Answer: To meet the needs of their brothers and sisters. To live as Christ called them.
- **How does this passage seem different from what our culture values today?**
 - Answers will vary. It's a bit mind-blowing when it comes up against our 21st Century ideals about capitalism, working hard to make money, saving money, spending money, investing, etc. All that we know goes out the window when we see these Christians giving away their hard-earned possessions and selling their homes and sources of revenue to give it all away to this new-found faith! On one hand we could see it as a little crazy, but on the other hand we can see it as an incredible act of faith.

NEXT, give them a scenario that will help them understand a little better. Tell them a story similar to the following, but replace "video game console" if necessary with something that better fits your group:

- **Imagine some company came out with the coolest new gaming console ever. This video game system put all other Playstations and Xboxes to shame. This thing revolutionizes the way you play video games. Obviously, you have to have it! Unfortunately, this new gaming system is going to cost you \$495 and your parents won't give you the money. So for the next six months you decide to sell as much of your stuff as you can to make money. You mow your neighbor's lawn, clean toilets, and pinch every penny you have to save up enough money to buy that sweet new console. Finally, you save up enough to buy it. You have exactly \$495. You're so excited. This is going to be life changing! But on your way to the store, you hear a story about a person in your church who needs \$495 to buy medicine. You don't know this person, but you do go to the same church. This person can't afford their medicine and they're going to be in a lot of pain without it. In an act of extreme selflessness, you decide to give all of your hard-earned money to this person in need. Even though you worked really hard for that money, and you really wanted that video game system, and you don't really even know the sick person, your bonds in Christ outweigh your personal desires.**

Explain that this story might be a little cheesy, but in a lot of ways it relates to the Jerusalem church. The believers in the newly created church were giving all they had so that their brothers and sisters in Christ wouldn't go in need.

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THEN, ask your students some questions to further the discussion. Ask something like:

- **Since most of you probably don't own land or houses like the churchgoers in the story, does that mean you don't have to give? What are some other ways we can give?**
 - Answer: No. God calls all of us to give selflessly and generously. Even if we don't have a lot of money to give to others, we can give our time, talents, attention, and love to those in need.
- **The givers in the story were meeting the monetary needs of the church and its members, but what are some other needs we can meet?**
 - Answer: People need a lot of different things. As part of the church, we can give much-needed support, compassion, grace, mercy, and love. There are a lot of ways we can meet needs, if we'll just look for them.

NEXT, read or have someone to read Galatians 6:2. Then read or have someone read James 5:16. Ask something like:

- **How do those passages stretch our understanding of giving?**
 - Answer: It's not just about material things. We're also called to give our lives to each other, to bear burdens, confess sins, and hear from others as they confess their sin.
- **So, do we get to pick one? Can we just be generous with our possessions or just be generous with giving our lives to others?**
 - Answer: No, we don't get to pick on or the other, we're called to give both.

THEN, wrap up the Lead In by saying something like the following:

- **Our giving doesn't stop with dollars. We are called to give so much more. Just like we see in these passages, brothers and sisters in Christ can meet each other's needs by bearing burdens and praying for one another. As Christians seeking after Christ in discipleship, we are called to meet the physical and spiritual needs of our Christian family.**

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** This section seeks to help students apply these ideas about giving and meeting needs to their every day life
- **Set-Up:** A dry-erase board if possible.

FIRST, begin this section by explaining to your students that writing a check or dropping a few dollars in the offering plate can be easy, but as Christians we weren't called to "easy." Jesus wants us to live in intentional community, and that means getting involved with one another.

THEN, as you begin the conclusion of this lesson with *The Last Word*, ask your students to share some needs they've seen in the community (without getting too personal for privacy considerations). If they're struggling to come up with some, try suggesting something similar to the following:

- **An elderly church member needs their lawn mowed**
- **The church's playground needs to be fixed**
- **A student at school is asking questions about faith, and wants to know more about Jesus**
- **A local family needs help paying medical bills**
- **The church is searching for a new pastor, and needs prayer**

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NEXT, explain that there are many needs in every church, and these are just a few examples. As your students come up with good examples, write them down on your dry-erase board. When you have enough, have your students break into pairs or small groups and discuss a plan of action to address that need. Their plan should be practical and sustainable so that just a few students are able to execute it. Give them a few minutes to discuss, and then ask them to share their plans with the group. With each plan, suggest practical changes and encourage their planning process. Write these plans on the board next to their correlating need. Then, ask your students something like these questions:

- **Do you think you could actually follow your plan through and meet that need? Why or why not?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Why is it so hard for us to step up and help with needs like these?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What is holding you back from working to meet the need you discussed this week?**
 - Answers will vary.

THEN, encourage your students to be more than talkers and thinkers, but to be doers. Even if they don't have the money to give, they are able to serve others in many ways. With the examples your group discussed, point out to them that they know needs that are out there, and they know ways to start addressing them.

FINALLY, conclude your lesson by saying something like:

- **Our church and this world have many needs. God has blessed us and enabled us to meet these needs, if we're willing to give. The church in Jerusalem gave everything they had, and there were no needy among them. If we were to give all today, what would happen? We don't have to sell everything we have and live in poverty, but we do need to recognize that our earthly possessions came from God and belong to God. Our things won't last nearly as long as the Spirit of Christ that unifies us all.**

Allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from your students.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.