

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
UNIT 4: A DISCIPLE ENGAGES WITH HIS OR HER SURROUNDINGS
LESSON 34: WHEN WE SERVE OTHERS, WE SERVE GOD

What we want students to learn: That when they invest in the lives of the needy in their community, and in the greater world around them, it's as if they are serving God Himself.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To define ways in which they can begin (or increase) helping the needy in your community, and to commit to following through.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 25:31-40

Supporting Scripture: Matthew 10:40-42

Overview: The disciple's call to engage with his or her surroundings is ultimately a call to service, especially when it comes to serving those who are less fortunate than ourselves. When we do this, Scripture makes it clear that we are not just serving needy individuals, we are serving God Himself. This truth should, maybe more than anything, motivate us to serve others with great passion. This lesson will equip you to challenge your students to embrace this mindset as Christ-followers.

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 34 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 34, 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:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the

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long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE SETTING

These teachings of Jesus' occur between His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the culmination of the growing plot to take His life. This makes this message part of Jesus' Passion Week. The discourse in Matthew 25 is part of Jesus' description of the final judgment, when man's deeds will be exposed. This was one of the last straws for the Jewish rulers who responded by demanding His arrest.

THE MAIN POINT

It is impossible to claim the life of a disciple while ignoring the needs of others. Jesus expressed this in His life and teaching. Serving God on earth must include serving others as we live out the Gospel that we preach. Service to others is our service to God.

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 open students' hearts and eyes to the potential impact that can occur when we choose to meet the needs of others.
- **Set-Up:** None

FIRST, start by explaining to your students that you are going to do a little exercise in hopes of framing the topic of today's lesson. Ask your students to come up with a list of the biggest issues facing our country today. Allow them to list off issues they think are important without much in the way of directing them. If they happen to list "poverty," explain to them that you're going to flesh this one out a bit more. If they didn't list it, explain that you're going to add one.

THEN, explain that poverty is one of the most damaging issues to people living in the US. Read off the following stats. Say:

- **In the U.S. alone, there are over 43 million people living in poverty, unsure of the availability of their next meal.**
- **There are nearly a half million children in foster care in the U.S.**
- **23% of American households with children under the age of 18 are single mother households, many of whom work multiple jobs.**
- **Nearly 20% of children in the US fall below the poverty line.**
- **There are 47 million adults between the ages of 18 and 64 (working age) that are not working. They total 24% of working age adults, but account for 62% of working age adults in poverty.**

NEXT, explain that these are just a few sample statistics about the problem of poverty in the US. Lead students in a short discussion. Ask:

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- Is poverty something you are aware of on a daily basis? If so, why? If not, why do you think it's easy to miss?
 - Answers will vary.
- The biggest problem with poverty is the ripple effect it has on the rest of a person's life. What areas of a person's life can be impacted by poverty?
 - Answers will vary. Help students see that basic daily needs such as food and housing are impacted. But it's also transportation, medical care, even education. Poverty has far reaching effects on people.
- Have you had any personal experience engaging with someone who is needy? What was the context? How did it make you feel?
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, explain to your students that as you continue your look at what it means to engage with your surroundings as a disciple of Jesus, interacting with those impacted by poverty is actually a main part of it. Say something like:

- **The Bible is extremely clear, God has a heart for those who are the most needy. It's not that God cares about them more than people who aren't struggling with poverty. It's simply that God goes out of His way to make sure those in need know they are being heard. In the Old Testament, God had certain provisions included in His Law that allowed for the charitable care of those most in need. And in the New Testament, we see that we are called to be people who look after those who most need help. That's what we're going to see today. Let's get started.**

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

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students understand that when they invest in the lives of the needy in their community, and in the greater world around them, it's as if they are serving God Himself.
- **Set Up:** You may benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not critical. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRT, ask students a couple of questions to get started. Ask:

- **Do you think about the needs of others often, or do you have a tendency to get tunnel vision and be consumed with your own life? Be honest!**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What are some of the needs that DO tend to catch your attention?**
 - Answers will vary. Allow them time to share things that may already be on their hearts. If there is little response, that will also provide a good foundation for the lesson. Try to focus on conviction, not guilt.

THEN, explain that you're going to read a passage of Scripture that contains one of Jesus' last messages, just three days before His death on the cross. Instruct students to turn to Matthew 25. While they are finding it, give students the context for the passage by referencing the Bible Background portion of your lesson. Then, read or have a student read Matthew 25:31-36. When you've finished, ask:

- **What event is Jesus describing here?**
 - Answer: The future final judgment of all humankind after His second coming.

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- **Who are the “sheep” and who are the “goats”?**
 - Answer: The sheep are Christ’s followers who will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. The goats are those who did not follow Christ and will not enter.
- **Let’s make a list of the things that Jesus said His sheep did for Him. What do you see in these verses?**
 - Answer: They gave food when He was hungry, gave drink when He was thirsty, welcomed Him when He was a stranger, clothed Him when He was naked, visited Him when He was sick and in prison.

NEXT, read Matthew 25:37-40. Ask:

- **What confusion do the sheep express over these statements?**
 - Answer: They do not remember doing these things for Jesus.
- **How did Jesus respond to their confusion?**
 - Answer: By telling them that what they did for the needy of this world, was actually for Him and to Him.
- **Have you ever thought about serving other people as serving God directly? In what ways?**
 - Answers will vary. Allow for discussion.
- **How might that change your view toward other people in need? Would you focus less on whether or not they deserved your help?**
 - Allow for discussion but point out that there is no clause for helping those that we deem worthy. We are not commanded to judge or sort out the needy, only to meet the need.

Explain that when we hear Jesus’ heart in this passage, we are forced to realize that not meeting the needs of others is the same as rejecting Jesus. Loving others is not a suggestion, but a command. To neglect the needs of people is to live in disobedience. Say/ask something like:

- **It is not possible for one of us to meet all the needs of the world, but it is common for us to have the ability to meet a need and withhold action. Can you think of any examples that you’d be willing to share where you have neglected to meet a need that you were aware of? Let’s be transparent for a minute and join in a little confession.**
 - Answer: Consider leading in this discussion by sharing a time where you failed to act. Remember to focus on confession and transparency, not guilt or blame. Allow others to share as time permits.
- **When Jesus speaks of “the least of these my brothers” there are two possible groups that He is referencing. Just like the sheep and goats He has sorted in the judgment room, the least of these can refer to believers and unbelievers. How does meeting the needs of unbelievers serve Jesus and further His Kingdom?**
 - Answer: Meeting the physical or immediate needs of those who do not know Him provides an opportunity for us to show what His love looks like. When we meet the needs of those separated from God, we have an opportunity to say, “God sees you and He cares.” This can often open the door for the Gospel to be shared.
- **How does meeting the needs of fellow believers serve Jesus and further His Kingdom?**
 - Answer: It multiplies the effectiveness of God’s people. Throughout Scripture we see the gratitude of the disciples and apostles as people met their physical needs and enabled them to carry out the work of ministry. Jesus instructs His people to be a family, even a body, and carry each other’s burdens.

THEN, remind students that Jesus explained this in a previous teaching. Turn to Matthew 10:40-42 and read it together. Summarize by saying/asking:

- **Jesus is speaking about His followers here. How does this passage address how we should treat other believers who may be different from us?**

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o Answer: Student responses may vary, but point out that many needs go unmet in churches that take an every-man-for-himself attitude. How we care for one another in the family of God is how we reflect our relationship to Christ.

FINALLY, explain that this passage makes it clear that even a small kindness makes you a participant in the greater work. Say:

- **We cannot be tempted to think that we can't make a difference. This is just an excuse not to try. How hard is it to give a thirsty person a drink of water so they can keep working? Jesus says that even an act this small can have a larger impact. What we do matters! What we don't do has consequences.**

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

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** For students to define ways in which they can begin (or increase) helping the needy in their community, and to commit to following through.
- **Set Up:** Paper for each student or a class poster board or marker board.

FIRST, remind students that when we think of the needs of the world, it is sometimes easy to get so overwhelmed that we get paralyzed and do nothing. Explain that we must remember that individually, we are not called to meet ALL the needs, but we are called. Encourage them to take a few minutes to break the problem down into some practical goals that you can work toward.

THEN, ask something like:

- **What are some things that our church is already doing to meet the needs of others?**
 - o Answers will vary. Lead them to consider areas of service they may not be aware of. You may even consider making a poster for your room with the Scripture reference of Matthew 25:35-41.
- **Let's think about some people groups or needs that we can reach and make a list. Is there a global or international project that we can participate in?**
 - o Answers will vary. Try to encourage your students with things they may already be doing, but push them to consider new avenues for ministry. Some suggestions may include Samaritan's Purse/Operation Christmas Child, sponsoring an international child as a group through an organization similar to World Vision or Compassion International, sending missionaries or going on a mission trip, and so on.
- **What are some community needs that we could meet in our area?**
 - o Answers will vary. Brainstorm outlets such as local food banks, homeless shelters, low-income public schools, smaller churches, nursing homes, hospitals, etc. Encourage them to be specific as to how they could go about finding the needs and making a plan to meet them.
- **What are some needs that may be in our own church or your specific schools?**
 - o Answers will vary. Brainstorm the families that you may know who may have a deployed military parent, overburdened single parent, widows, shut-ins, special needs, hospital bound, etc.

FINALLY, as a group, consider choosing one project that you will pursue. It can be local or global, big or small. Maybe you consider a trip to visit a nursing home, or collect a bag of groceries or school supplies for a family that could use them. Be considerate not to offend anyone, but just offer it as an act of kindness in Jesus' name.

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Close in prayer asking for God to grant you discernment and wisdom as you seek to see others the way He does. Don't forget to encourage students to use the devotions for the week to deepen their study.

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.