WHO BELONGS?

FOCUS VERSE
Mark 10:45
For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

LESSON TEXT
Mark 10:13-22, 41-52

TRUTH ABOUT GOD
God loves and cares for those whom the world overlooks.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE
I will look for ways to lovingly serve those who are hurting.

Series Overview:
This series, “Putting Others First,” will take a look at Jesus’ love for the oft overlooked. Jesus welcomed children the world rejected, and He healed a blind man the world ignored. He even ministered to a rich young ruler who had everything but the gospel. While others esteemed riches and authority, Jesus valued service and ministry to one another. Everyone, those with little or much, is welcome in the kingdom of God.
SG TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: If you could only speak one last word to your family or friends, what would it be?

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. JESUS’ MINISTRY SHOWED THAT HE CARED FOR EVERYONE
   A. The Young, the Rich, and the Blind
      » In what ways can we show love and care for children, particularly those who are not part of our own family?
      » Do you feel jealous or insecure when other people excel in areas where you struggle? How can you change those feelings?
   B. I Will Show God’s Love to Everyone I Meet
      » How can we increase our sensitivity to the needs of others, including their spiritual needs?

II. JESUS’ MINISTRY SHOWED THAT HIS HEART WAS SET ON SERVING OTHERS
   A. Jesus Ministered Out of Love
   B. Some People Rejected Jesus’ Love
   C. Jesus Called His Disciples to Show Love through Service
      » If you stood before Jesus today, would He consider you a sheep or a goat? If you feel more like a goat than a sheep, what can you do to change that?
   D. I Will Look for Ways to Lovingly Serve Those Who Are Hurting
      » What resources or skills can you use to minister to someone in need this week?

Internalizing the Message

Prayer Focus
Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:
• For God to help us see the needs of others even above our own
• For God to use us to meet others’ needs
William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was known for his passionate commitment to loving and serving people, particularly the poorest residents of the poorest sections of London. Many inspiring quotes about evangelism and Christian service have been attributed to Booth, but one of the most insightful quotes attributed to him is also the shortest.

In 1910 the leaders of the Salvation Army invited the aged Booth to address their annual convention scheduled to convene during the Christmas season. Booth’s health had deteriorated so much he was not able to attend. He died less than two years later. Since he could not be present, the meeting’s organizers asked him to send a telegram to be read to those in attendance.

Sending messages via telegram was a costly method of communication, so Booth’s remarks would have to be brief. Telegraph operators charged by the word, and the ministry’s funds were limited. William Booth would have to find some way to inspire his fellow workers using as few words as possible. According to the story, Booth pondered what he could say that would communicate the feelings that had inspired him to devote his life to ministering to those in need. He wanted to say something to motivate Salvation Army personnel who had been selflessly giving their time and energy during the coldest and darkest months of the year to serve their poorest and most vulnerable neighbors.

When the day of the convention arrived, the meeting hall filled with delegates eager to hear from their founder. When it was announced that Booth was not able to be present, the disappointment was palpable. But spirits lifted when someone opened the telegram from Booth and the moderator prepared to read the founder’s brief remarks.

On the telegram, Booth shared a single word—a word that succinctly summarized his life’s work and the vision he had for the organization he founded.

The message simply read, “Others.”
BIBLE LESSON

Others. That single word also summarizes what motivated the ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus outlined His ministry and mission in a simple statement to His disciples in Mark 10:45. “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

I. JESUS’ MINISTRY SHOWED THAT HE CARED FOR EVERYONE

Who belongs? In God’s kingdom, everyone belongs. God’s grace is not limited to a select few. The Bible closes with an invitation to whosoever will (Revelation 22:17). Everyone can freely drink from the living water Jesus offers regardless of gender, national origin, ethnic identity, or social status.

Jesus went out of His way to minister to outsiders who had been rejected by the religious and cultural establishment. He stopped by a well in Samaria to minister to a Samaritan woman living in adultery. Jesus traveled to the Gentile lands of Tyre and Sidon where He cast the devil out of a Syrophoenician woman’s daughter (Mark 7:24–30). He called the tax collector Zacchaeus out of a sycamore tree and went home for dinner with him, causing the whole community to question Jesus’ choice of company. Jesus never apologized for loving people, especially the people everyone else seemed to find distasteful.

A. The Young, the Rich, and the Blind

In a single chapter, the Gospel of Mark makes it clear that Jesus loved and cared for everyone, no matter the person’s status or station in life. In Mark 10, Jesus ministered to individuals from three distinct walks of life: children, a rich young ruler, and a blind beggar named Bartimaeus.

Parents seemed to be excited for their children to meet Jesus. They brought them to Him. In our culture, we expect politicians and preachers to kiss babies and give candy to children, but this was not the case in the first century. Children in Jesus’ day were considered unimportant. In Greek and Roman culture, infanticide was common and culturally acceptable. Wicked King Herod murdered baby boys in Bethlehem seemingly without a second thought (Matthew 2:16-18). Despite what some may argue, today's widespread acceptance of abortion reveals that twenty-first century North American attitudes toward children are not much different.

Jesus’ disciples adopted the prevailing attitude of their culture because they responded to this intrusion on Jesus’ time with a rebuke for the children and their parents. Imagine their surprise when Jesus offered His own rebuke, responding, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). In the same verse, Mark records
that Jesus was much displeased with His disciples’ lack of love and compassion for children.

Jesus is still not pleased with those who neglect the well-being of children. Sadly, the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the youngest members of our society are often sacrificed on the altar of career advancement, money, and other temporal distractions. Our God loves and cares for every child, including the fatherless, the orphan, the abused, and the unborn baby in the womb. How we treat the youngest and most vulnerable members of society is a direct reflection of our attitude toward Jesus.

Not long after this story, Jesus encountered the man who has come to be known as the rich young ruler. This man seemed to have everything going for him. He was rich and was in some area of authority. Luke 18:18 described him as a ruler. He did not fit the same demographic profile as Jesus’ disciples who were mostly common men without much wealth or power. The disciples may have been impressed by this man’s prestigious standing in society and by his money, much like most people today are awed by wealth and celebrity. The disciples also may have felt a twinge of insecurity at the prospect of this man becoming one of them. If someone with this rich ruler’s credentials decided to follow Jesus, how would it affect the disciples’ place in the spiritual pecking order?

Jesus was not awed by the rich young ruler’s wealth, power, or perceived righteousness. Neither was Jesus intimidated by his social standing. Jesus simply loved him. “Then Jesus beholding him loved him” (Mark 10:21).

As Jesus continued His journey to Jerusalem and the cross, Mark records one more overlooked person Jesus cared for. As Jesus was leaving Jericho, He was interrupted again, this time by the cries of a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. The crowd accompanying Jesus tried to shame the blind man into silence, but Bartimaeus would not be denied in his effort to get Jesus’ attention. As Mark wrote, “He cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me” (Mark 10:48).

The desperation in Bartimaeus’s voice arrested Jesus’ attention. The noise of the crowd and bustle of the nearby city could not drown it out. The love Jesus had for hurting people caused Him to momentarily place His other plans on hold. He stopped and commanded the crowd to call Bartimaeus.

Perhaps Bartimaeus was surprised that Jesus actually noticed his cries. As a blind beggar, he was likely used to being ignored. Most people tried to hurry by him as quickly as possible, hoping he would not notice their presence and ask them for money. Their typical response was akin to what most of us do when we see a roadside panhandler: we sometimes pretend not to notice. In our day, people keep the car windows rolled up, avoid eye contact, and pray the red light turns green quickly.
But not Jesus. He cares about those society neglects and rejects. He welcomes the homeless and the handicapped. He was on His way to save the world from sin, but He made time for a blind beggar everyone else tried to silence. Jesus did not overlook the one while on His way to save the many, even when the one was considered to be from the bottom rung of the social ladder. Jesus transformed Bartimaeus from a highway-side blind beggar into a walking testimony that still teaches us two millennia later about the love Jesus has for all people, even those the world neglects and rejects.

B. I Will Show God’s Love to Everyone I Meet

As Spirit-led believers, we must be sensitive to the needs of everyone we encounter, even the rich young rulers of our time. They may drive a luxury import and live in a gated community, but it does not mean they have no needs. Like Jesus, we must be perceptive to their true condition and be prepared to minister to them in any way possible. Of course, the kindest, most compassionate thing we can do for others is to share the gospel with them. People need to hear about the God who loves them so much He came to earth and went to the cross for them. If we are looking for a way to help others, we should begin by sharing the message of eternal salvation.

II. JESUS’ MINISTRY SHOWED THAT HIS HEART WAS SET ON SERVING OTHERS

Jesus did not just have kind feelings in His heart toward others; His actions demonstrated His love. He summed up His intentions in Mark 10:45 when he said, “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Jesus was willing to give everything, even His life, just to minister to others.

A. Jesus Ministered Out of Love

Jesus’ love and compassion were not limited to His family, friends, and followers. The writers of the Gospels made it clear that Jesus loved everyone. Love motivated everything Jesus did.

Matthew summed up Jesus’ itinerary by saying, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35). He did not stay on the road preaching because He wanted to build His brand or because He was expecting a financial payoff. Rather, as Matthew wrote in the following verse, “When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them” (Matthew 9:36). Compassion moved Jesus. His love was more than a feeling; He expressed it through His actions.

B. Some People Rejected Jesus’ Love

Sadly, Jesus’ love was not always reciprocated. Jesus’ love did not make everyone happy. The end of the rich young ruler’s story
is found in a melancholy verse in Mark 10. “And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions” (Mark 10:22). Real love does not always lead to rosy outcomes. Jesus loved people enough to tell them the truth. In the end, He was crucified by those who did not want to hear the truth.

C. Jesus Called His Disciples to Show Love through Service

Although Jesus knew what was coming, He bravely continued His journey to Jerusalem and the cross. While His disciples did not understand the full weight of what was happening, Jesus’ teaching and selfless example would serve as the inspiration for their future lives of sacrificial love.

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, He repeatedly called His followers to show love through acts of service. At one point He told them, “Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward” (Matthew 10:42). Jesus promised the smallest acts of service would not go unnoticed. Later in the same Gospel, Jesus told a story of sheep and goats. Sheep were those who did His will; goats were those who did not. He concluded Matthew 25 by saying, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). When we serve others, we are serving Jesus.

D. I Will Look for Ways to Lovingly Serve Those Who Are Hurting

Have you ever regretted a missed opportunity to do good? Sometimes we overlook opportunities to show love to others because we are consumed with our own problems. Sometimes life’s challenges leave us without the time, energy, or resources to help others. It happens to everyone. But God did not intend for these challenges to be our norm. If we are always so overwhelmed by our own problems that we cannot help others, we should rethink how we are living.

Perhaps our first step should be dedicating some of our resources to serving others. Can we set aside a few dollars a month to give to someone who has an unexpected need? Can we block off one afternoon each month to serve others in our community? Do we have a special skill or talent we can use to minister to others?

Our imagination and willingness to act are the only constraints on our opportunities to do good. Jesus promised if we will seek, we will find (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9). This can apply to service as well as to prayer. If we look for opportunities to do good, God will provide. Let us be like Jesus. Let us pray for God to lead us to find someone to serve.
INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

One parable in the Gospel of Luke still serves as one of the greatest stories of care and compassion for others. This story has inspired countless acts of love and kindness since the day Jesus first shared it with His followers.


Jesus began. A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by a vicious band of thieves. They beat him half to death and left him lying alongside the road to die of his wounds. Soon a priest and a Levite traveled down the same road. Both of these men were so preoccupied with their religious duties that they failed to notice the bleeding man lying by the side of the road. That was the best-case scenario. Worst case, they callously ignored him. They passed by without even asking if he was all right.

Thankfully, another traveler came along, but this man was a Samaritan. The mere mention of Samaritan caused Jesus’ audience to wince. Jews hated Samaritans. Thankfully for the wounded man, the Samaritan was not as cold-hearted as the Jewish priest and the Levite. When the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he had compassion on him. This surprised Jesus’ Jewish audience. The Samaritan provided emergency medical treatment to stabilize the man’s condition before transporting him to safety where he could receive additional care. Since health insurance and government-funded medical care were not part of daily life, paying for the cost of treatment fell to the Samaritan. He willingly shouldered this burden.

Who is our neighbor? According to Jesus, our neighbor is anyone we meet along the road of life, regardless of identity or present condition. Being a neighbor means more than just sending up an occasional emergency prayer to God to remind Him of how bad things are on earth while we silently hope someone else will come along and help. Jesus calls us to get personally involved. He reminds us, “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Being like Jesus means ministering to others, no matter who they are or where they are from, no matter what it costs.

Prayer Focus
Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:
• For God to help us see the needs of others even above our own
• For God to use us to meet others’ needs