



Sent by God: His People on His Mission

LESSON 7: We Will Serve

What does God send us forth to do?

Five concepts guide our mission. God sends his church forth in Worship, to Grow, Share, Reach Out, and Care.

We Will Serve Our Neighbors

Before you go further, open your Bible and read Luke 10:25-37. Luke tells us that a lawyer wanted to test Jesus. In the end, the lawyer was the one tested. Jesus acknowledged his correct answer according to the Law and responded, "Do this and you will live." But the lawyer wanted to know how far he had to go to be a good neighbor. Luke says that "he wanted to justify himself. So he asked Jesus, 'Who is my neighbor?' In response, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. It was not what the lawyer wanted to hear. The parable reframes Israel's relationship to the Gentiles. It redefines Israel's covenant relationship with God—"love God and neighbor". For Jesus, a neighbor is anyone in need, not only another Jew. The parable indicts Jewish exclusivism and restates what it means to be God's people.

Ask the Question

The last concept of our mission ("We will serve our neighbors") compels us to ask afresh, "Who is my neighbor?" Unlike the lawyer, we do not ask the question to test Jesus; we ask the question because it is central to our mission, with personal, community, and global implications. Serving our neighbors is a life, not just a program down at the church building.

Continuing the Legacy

Serving our neighbors has always been important to this church. This service has taken many forms through the years. In recent years, we have served our community with school supplies, Thanksgiving food drives and dinners, and Christmas baskets. We

have broadened our concept of serving our neighbors with short-term mission trips to Honduras and Mexico.

Into Our Neighborhoods

The leadership of this church is committed to serving our neighbors through various ministries. However, we realize the need to go beyond hosting events at the building, or even in our neighborhoods. Serving our neighbors must become our personal and family mission. Wherever you live, you are the light of Christ, the salt of the earth (Mt. 5:13-16). Ask the "neighbor questions". What can I do with other Christians to serve our neighborhood? What would happen if several Christians who live in the same neighborhood gathered for prayer about God's work among their neighbors? What about a team approach to hosting a block party? Neighborhood communication opens up opportunities. Service flows from relationships.

Cups of Cold Water

Nothing makes a greater impact on others than genuine acts of kindness and service. Christian faith is seen in the everyday stuff of life. Sometimes, it is as simple as giving a cup of cold water (Mk. 9:41). Jesus despised self-serving, manipulative religion (Mt. 23:1ff). We do not serve our neighbors to manipulate them into being religious. We serve them because it is who we are—the body of Christ. Jesus is our model. He did not come to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45). We must constantly ask, "What are our 'cups of cold water' in this community?" To serve our neighbors in the spirit of Jesus is to believe that God is at work in the world and that he uses our service for his redemptive purposes. We must use our gifts to serve others. It is one of many ways God's grace is dispensed. We serve by the strength God provides (1 Pet. 4:10-11). To belong to Christ is to serve our neighbors, here, there and everywhere, regardless!

Discussion Questions

How is “serving our neighbors” related to the other aspects of our mission? (Being God’s people of hope who exalt him, living out the culture of the cross as faithful disciples, building communities of faith, sharing the story of Jesus)

What do the questions and motives of the lawyer help us see? Is this a warning for us? How does it speak to our programs? How does it speak to our Ministries?

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, what is so shocking about the ending of the parable? What makes this parable so challenging to the Jews? How does the parable apply to us? Individually? Our Ministries? In our neighborhoods?

What is the relationship between church ministries and serving our neighbors? Is it easier to participate in church programs centered at the building than in our homes or neighborhoods? Why or Why not? What relationship do you see to Matthew 5:13-16? What is one thing you could do with other Christians this spring to serve your neighbors?

What does Mark 9:38-41 teach us about service? What is Jesus not saying? Read Matthew 23:1ff. When does religion become self serving and/or manipulative?

Read 1 Peter 4:10-11. What do we learn about gifts and service? How will we know we are accomplishing the mission of serving our neighbors?

One of our goals during this series is to identify “mission words” to remind us of God’s purpose as we go forth into our community and world. In your opinion, which of the following words are most memorable or best communicate our commitment and desire to serve our neighbors, our community, and our world?

- _____ MINISTER
- _____ SERVE
- _____ TOUCH
- _____ HELP
- _____ CARE
- _____ LOVE

Notes

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