



Lesson Title: Where Should We Serve?



Key Concept: Serving is key to our identity as disciples of Jesus and living out the greatest commandment. But where should we serve? We serve wherever there is a need.



Scriptures:

Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

(Acts 10:38 *New Living Translation*)

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

(John 10:10 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Mark 6:1–6; John 6:1–14; Matthew 15:32–38; Mark 8:1–9; John 4; 8:1–11; Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 4:36–41; Matthew 4:23–24; 9:35–36; 12:15; Mark 1:38–41; 3:7–11; 6:53–56; Luke 7:11–15, 20–21



Lesson Thoughts:

When the desire to do good, to serve others, rises within us, a question soon follows: Where can I serve? When we are contemplating where to serve, we find the prime example in Jesus. He served wherever he was. The best place to start is wherever we are. Jesus did what he could in his hometown of Nazareth. The preconceptions of those who thought they knew him well did not preclude him from serving them as much as possible (Mark 6).

As much as we might be drawn to the bright lights and big cities thinking, "If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere,"¹ Jesus fed the multitudes far from population centers (John 6:1–14; Matthew 15:32–38; Mark 8:1–9). Because they

¹ *New York, New York*: music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, 1944.

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were far from others, they needed his help more than those with city resources all around them. Service should not be a function of opportunity of advancement for ourselves, but an occasion to improve things for others.

Another location for service is in an area of hostility. In John 4, Jesus brought good to a place where he was not welcome. Hundreds of years of religious and ethnic animosity and social constraints stood against any progress from the meeting at Jacob's well. Jesus began to help by asking for help. This could well be the foundation for the quote from Ben Franklin, "If you want to make a friend, let someone do you a favor." In similar fashion, in John 8:1–11, Jesus did not add fuel to the fire of enmity already burning in the scribes and Pharisees by fighting with them in the temple, which they considered their home turf. Instead of arguing, he essentially ignored them until he had their undivided attention and then helped them to change their perspective.

Another place that can be used to serve is where we retreat. When Jesus and his disciples withdrew to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, an opportunity to do good presented itself clothed in the need of the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matthew 15:21–28). The place was inconvenient, and the recipient was not on the approved list, but the need was real. Where we serve is about where there is a need, rather than just a geographical location. In Mark 4:36–41, Jesus was geographically on the Sea of Galilee, but physically and emotionally he was in a place of total exhaustion as shown by the fact that he was sleeping through the gale. He embodied the quote attributed to John Wesley, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Does where we serve matter? Why?
- 2) Why do we feel hesitant about serving locally?
- 3) Name some places that seem hostile to serve.
- 4) What physical or emotional locations exempt us from serving or doing good?

Next Lesson: When Should We Serve?

Notes and Reflections

- 1) Read the context Scriptures and reflect on how these fit in with Jesus' serving.
- 2) Why were people hostile about Jesus doing good?
- 3) Reflect on the hostility of Jesus' friends at the raising of Lazarus in John 11 and how he overcame it.

Notes and Reflections, cont.