



SERVING THE POOR AND OPPRESSED

KEY VERSE

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" Matthew 25:40

BIBLICAL BASIS

Matthew 25:31-46; James 2:5

THE BIG IDEA

Every Christian is challenged by Jesus to serve the needs of those who are poor and oppressed.

AIMS OF THIS SESSION

During this session you will guide students to:

- Examine the words of Christ about helping the poor and oppressed;
- Discover practical ways to minister to the poor and oppressed;
- Implement new goals of ministry to the poor and oppressed.

WARM UP

MY WORLD—

A look at the life of a person from another world.

TEAM EFFORT— JUNIOR HIGH/ MIDDLE SCHOOL

"I FEEL" STATEMENTS—

Students examine how they feel about the needs of others.

TEAM EFFORT— HIGH SCHOOL

I WAS HUNGRY—

Students look at how some respond to the needs of others.

IN THE WORD

A SHEEP OR A GOAT—

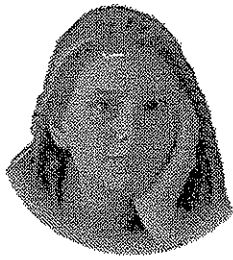
A Bible study on serving Jesus by serving others.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT (OPTIONAL)

Questions to get students thinking and talking about meeting the needs of others.

PARENT PAGE

A tool to get the session into the home and allow parents and young people to discuss ways to serve the needy.



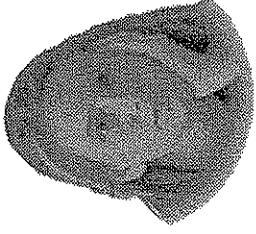
LEADER'S DEVOTIONAL

“Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?” (James 2:5).

Dynamic life transformations happen when young people learn to serve the poor and oppressed. Not too long ago, I was in Mexicali, Mexico, with our high school ministry for a week-long mission trip. One morning when I was meeting with some of our student leaders, a small barefoot Mexican boy stood nearby watching us. As we sipped our cups of warm hot chocolate on the cold morning, the boy nudged nearer and nearer to us. He finally walked right up and plopped down in the lap of a girl named Kerry. Seeing the discarded Styrofoam cups lying nearby, he began to pick up each one and sip out the remainder of the chocolate at the bottom of the cup. With a smile on his face, he drank from one cup to the next. This barefoot, dirty-faced little boy actually drank our leftovers! For all of us watching, we couldn't help but feel that God was teaching us an incredible lesson on poverty we wouldn't soon forget.

I'm convinced that youth ministries filled with fun and games all the time are perhaps not the most effective ministries. While there's nothing wrong with having fun and having crazy events, they can't compare to the life transformations that happen when students serve the poor and oppressed. As youth workers, we don't always have to fabricate the next BIG event. We don't need to entertain kids. We need to show them the poor who are loved by God. Telling teenagers about poverty won't change them. Television won't show them how they can make a difference. Direct, person-to-person, face-to-face contact with poor people just like the little Mexican boy with no shoes, is the most effective way for students to develop a heart for serving the least of God's children. Youth ministries that seek to serve the poor and oppressed are youth ministries of substance. Teaching young people to serve others is one of the best eternal investments you can make not only in their lives, but also in the lives of the people they serve. (Written by Joey O'Connor.)

“It is high time that the ideal of success should be replaced by the ideal of service.”—Albert Einstein



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THE BIG IDEA

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WARM UP (5-10 MINUTES)

MY WORLD

- Before class choose someone for a role-play. The person plays someone from a third-world country. Have him or her describe his or her life—work, food, home, income, etc. If possible, provide photographs. Then ask the group what they will do about what they just heard.

TEAM EFFORT—JUNIOR HIGH/ MIDDLE SCHOOL (15-20 MINUTES)

"I FEEL" STATEMENTS

- Give each student a copy of "I Feel Statements" on page 49 and a pen or pencil, or display a copy using an overhead projector.
- As a whole group, students complete their pages.
- Forty-thousand people die of starvation each day on planet earth.
- More than half of the people in the world have never heard about Jesus Christ.
- Almost one-third of all young girls in America will be sexually abused by age 18.

Fold

41

3. Serving people means serving Jesus.

What point is Jesus making in verse 40?

Have you ever felt as though by helping another person you were in reality helping Jesus? If yes, when and how?

SO WHAT?

Circle the letter of the response that best describes you.

When it comes to the idea of serving people:

- I have a long way to go.
- I'm not sure what to do.
- I'm beginning to head in the right direction.
- I struggle with selfishness.
- Other.....

What one principle from this study can you use as a new goal for your life today?

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT (OPTIONAL)

• Use the questions on page 55 after or as a part of "In the Word."

1. What makes it difficult to look at the world through the eyes of Jesus?

2. What should an individual Christian's response be to hunger and poverty?

3. What one thing could this group do to help fight both physical and spiritual hunger and poverty?

PARENT PAGE

- Distribute page to parents.

When I read these statements I feel...

"May my heart break with the things that break the heart of God." Bob Pierce, Founder of World Vision
What do you think Bob Pierce meant in this prayer?

What can you do personally and as a group to make a positive impact in this world?

TEAM EFFORT—HIGH SCHOOL (15-20 MINUTES)

I WAS HUNGRY

- Give each student a copy of "I Was Hungry" on page 51 and a pen or pencil, or display a copy using an overhead projector.
 - As a whole group, students complete their pages.
- "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:40).

I Was Hungry

I was hungry

And you formed a humanities club
And discussed my hunger.

Thank you.

I was naked

And in your mind
You debated the morality of my
Appearance.

I was homeless

And you preached to me
Of the spiritual shelter of the
Love of God.

I was imprisoned

And you crept off quietly
To your chapel in the cellar
And prayed for my release.

I was sick

And you knelt and thanked God for
Your health.
I was lonely

And you left me alone
To pray for me.

Author Unknown

Have you seen the Christian Church sometimes act like this poem?

Read Matthew 25:40. What does Jesus say about serving the needy person?

1 IN THE WORD (25-30 MINUTES)

A SHEEP OR A GOAT

- Divide students into groups of three or four.
 - Give each student a copy of "A Sheep or a Goat" on page 53 and a pen or pencil, or display a copy using an overhead projector.
 - Students complete the Bible study.
- Read Matthew 25:31-46.
We can learn at least three points from this parable:
1. God wants us to help in the simple things.
- List the specific actions Jesus mentions in Matthew 25:31-46.

What are other simple ways to help?

a.

b.

c.

Why would God want us to serve in the simple things?

2. We should give simply for the sake of giving. True giving is with no strings attached.

What was the attitude of the people in verse 44? In verse 37?

What do you think it means to be generous?

TEAM EFFORT

"I FEEL" STATEMENTS

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Team Effort

I Was Hungry

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PARENT PAGE



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"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:40).

Here's an interesting story:

Martin of Tours was a Roman soldier and a Christian. One cold winter day, as he was entering a city, a beggar stopped him and asked of alms; Martin had no money, but the beggar was blue and shivering with cold, and Martin gave what he had. He took off his soldier's coat, worn and frayed as it was; he cut it in two and gave half of it to the beggar man. That night he had a dream. In it he saw the heavenly places and all the angels and Jesus in the midst of them; and Jesus was wearing half a Roman soldier's cloak. One of the angels said to him, "Master, why are you wearing that battered old cloak? Who gave it to you?" And Jesus answered softly, "My servant Martin gave it to me."¹

The ultimate goal in life is to serve Jesus.

Nobel Peace Prize recipient Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India, was walking the streets of the poorest of poor in Calcutta when a reporter asked her, "What motivated you to commit your life to the sick and dying?" Her reply, "I haven't committed my life to the ill. I've committed my life to Jesus Christ, and it just so happens I see Jesus on the faces of the sick and dying."

If you could serve Jesus in any way possible, what would you do?

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What could our family do?

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What keeps you from committing your life to the above dream or desire?

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Take a few minutes to pray for the needs of the world specifically and by name. Pray also about your partnership in making a difference.

Note

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew: The Daily Bible Study Series* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 326.



Session 3 "Serving the Poor and Oppressed"
Date