

Lesson 1: Life-changing Service

What we want students to learn: That the heart of service is seen in God’s desire to provide for us, His children.

What we want students to do with what they’ve learned: To understand that they are called to serve others, and to evaluate their attitudes toward serving.

Scripture Focus: Psalm 23, Deuteronomy 15:7-11, 1 John 3:17-19, 1 Peter 4:10-11

Overview:

Christian service is best understood as work done for others in the name of God, bringing good to others and glory to God. Service is central to what it means to be a Christ-follower. We see this in the very character of God Himself. Throughout the Bible, God provides for us, His children. In His great efforts to meet our needs, we see the foundations of the call to serve others. Scripture builds on this and shows that as God’s people, we are called to serve others, in His name, as well. The goal of this service-driven love is long-term, Gospel-centered impact on those we serve, doing good for them and bringing glory to God. This lesson will help your students grasp these truths, and will challenge them on their current attitudes toward serving others.

Teacher Prep Video

The *elements Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your “*Service Teacher Prep Video*,” click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/service-teacher-prep>
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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, while *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passages are 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

Psalms

- **Author:** God inspired various authors to write a majority of the Psalms in their era, including seventy-three by David, twelve by Asaph, eleven by the Korahites and two by Solomon. Heman, Ethan and Moses each wrote one, while the authorship of fifty other Psalms remain unknown.

- **Time frame:** The Psalms were written during different eras of Israel's history, spanning from 1100 BC (i.e Psalm 29, 68) to 400 BC (i.e. Psalm 119).
- **Purpose:** The Psalms are inspired by God to poetically reflect humanity's journey with Him. Each psalm serves a different purpose, such as a personal or communal lament, hymn, song, reflection or declaration. Many of these were set to music and intended to be shared publicly, even when sharing a revealing confession (i.e. Psalm 51).

Deuteronomy

- **Author:** While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Deuteronomy, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- **Time frame:** The dating of the Deuteronomy is a point of debate. The issue is that no one knows for sure when the Exodus occurred, whether it was in the mid-1400s BC or a later date around the mid 1200s BC. The writing would have occurred around those general dates.
Purpose: *Deuteronomy* means "second law." It was a reminder of the law of God for the second generation of Israelites in the desert before they entered the Promised Land. It reminded the people that the Lord is God. He is faithful to keep his promises to His people.

1 John

- **Author:** 1 John was written by John the Apostle. John was one of Jesus' disciples and was referred to as "the beloved disciple." John was probably only a teenager when he spent his three with Jesus. In addition to 1 John, he ended up authoring 2 John, 3 John, the Gospel of John, and Revelation.
- **Time frame:** 1 John was probably written sometime after the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, but probably no later than 90 AD.
- **Purpose:** John was writing to a population (1st Century Christ-followers) who had seen their ranks diminished at the onset of Roman persecution. John was calling his audience to a faith that was doctrinally sound and application oriented. He reminded his readers of the teachings of Christ, and urged them to put them into practice.

1 Peter

- **Author:** 1 Peter was written by Peter, one of Jesus' most trusted disciples and one of the key leaders of the growing movement of Christ-followers.
- **Time frame:** 1 Peter was likely written between 54-68 AD.
- **Purpose:** 1 Peter was written to a people under persecution, likely under the reign of Nero. Peter calls the Church to persevere under trials because eternal life awaits them. He encourages them that God's promises to His people will endure and should be the basis of their hope.

The Main Point

You'll begin by helping students understand that we can see the heart of service in God's desire to give and provide for us, His children. You'll show this by studying the Psalms 23 passage. Then, using the Deuteronomy and 1 John passages, you'll teach students that as God's children, we are called to serve others, especially those less fortunate than us. Finally, you'll help students see that serving others results in their good and God's glory by studying the 1 Peter 4 passage.

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 help students begin to understand that we are valuable to God
- **Set up, Part 1:** Gather 10 items (or pictures of items via Google image search) of varying values. They can range from a candy bar to a laptop to a car. The variety is up to you. Don't pick something where the price is too obvious. You want them to have to guess. Give each student/team a piece of paper to write down their guesses.
- **Set up, Part 2:** Have 10 pictures of different people, ranging from a poor beggar to a "normal person" to famous celebrity.

FIRST, depending on the size of your group, you can divide up into teams or have each student do it individually. This can be a competition or a just a discussion starter. That's up to you.

THEN, explain to your students that you have 10 items, and they have to arrange the items in order from least valuable to most valuable. Give each student/team a few minutes to write down their best guess for the order. The goal is accuracy, not necessarily speed (although speed can be the tiebreaker if needed). Once everyone is done, do the big reveal. If you're doing this as a competition, give each team five points for every item in the right order, taking away a point for each spot an item is away from its right place.

NEXT, once the game has finished, dig deeper into how they determined how much things were worth. Ask questions such as:

- **Did you find it difficult to determine what the value of each item was? Why or why not?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **Were you surprised to find something was worth considerably more or less than you thought? Explain.**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **(PICK ANY ITEM) If someone were to offer you 10x what (certain item) was worth, would that change how you viewed its value? Why would that make a difference?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, precede to the second part of the game. This will help to pivot you toward the lesson. Tell your students you're going to play the game again, with a twist. You're going to show them the pictures of ten individuals, and tell them they need to rank them from least valuable to most valuable. Resist the urge to give a lot of explanation, just tell them what they're supposed to do and then go. Don't explain what you mean by valuable or the criteria you're looking for. This will be for them to decide. There might be some resistance, but tell them to just go for it.

Give them just a couple of minutes to rank the people. Once they're finished, have each group reveal their order. Ask questions like the following to get them to talk about the decision making process:

- **What criteria did you use to rank these people?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **Was it easy or difficult to rank people? Why?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **Was it fair for me to ask you to rank people like that? Why or why not?**

- *Answers will vary.*

NOTE: You might get a person or group that “guesses” the way the lesson is going and gives you the “church answer” and ranks them with the famous people last and the poor people first. Perfect opportunity to really get into their motivations! Keep questioning the why behind their answers and say something like, “So, what you’re telling me is that you ranked these people based on how you thought I’d want you to answer. Does your view of people change depending on how others around you expect to view them?”

FINALLY, transition to the main part of the lesson by saying something like:

- **In the first part of the activity, you ranked items based on their value. Their value is likely based mostly around how much you are willing to pay, or how much a store is willing to let you have it for. If you don’t want to pay \$300 for a Playstation, it’s not that valuable to you. But if you’re willing to pay \$50,000 for a car, it’s probably very valuable to you. It’s a pretty simple system. Yet when we transitioned to people, we determined their value on all sorts of different criteria, so most of your rankings were all over the place.**

Explain that for the next three weeks, you’re going to be talking about service. Before you can talk about service, though, you need to understand why you do it. Why do we serve? Why is this so important to God? Remind them that’s why we played this game. We need to work to understand how much people matter to God.

The Main Event

- **Goal:** That students will understand that the heart of service is seen in God’s desire to provide for us, His children.
- **Set up:** Prior to the lesson, print out the “Lesson 1 Psalm 23” PDF. Print up enough copies for everyone to have one. Also, have a dry-erase board or something similar.

FIRST, explain to the students that it’s easy to understand how valuable we are to God. We simply need to look at the price He paid for us! Have a student read or recite John 3:16. Ask questions like:

- **What did God give for us?**
 - *Answer:* Jesus
- **So how valuable does that make us to God?**
 - *Answer:* We are worth Jesus to God.

THEN, say something like:

- **You are so valuable to God that He felt that you were worth paying Jesus for. That’s an amazing thing! That also means everyone around you, from the most famous celebrity to the poorest person, is worth Jesus to God as well. The Bible is full of verses and stories about how God loves us and values us beyond measure, and provides for us. We’re going to look in depth at one of those here today.**

NEXT, distribute the Psalm 23 handout. While you’re passing it out, you can go deeper into the context and history surrounding this passage. Explain a little about how a shepherd worked, how their job was to care for defenseless and helpless sheep. Once everyone has the paper, they are to take a few minutes to read through the passage. Once they’ve read through it, instruct them to do the following:

- **Put a box around every mention of God (or the pronouns in place of God)**
- **Underline where God provides for our needs**
- **Circle places of struggle or trouble**

The goal is for the students to really read this passage that is likely familiar to them.

THEN, once the students have done that, pull out the dry-erase board and have the students yell out all the places they've underlined. Write them down on the board, leaving space to write afterward for each one. Once the students have identified all the places where God takes care of us, ask them to "translate" them into modern day language.

- For example, "He makes me lie down in green pastures" might be stated, "He gives me a comfortable place to rest."

Don't be afraid of silence. This kind of thinking takes time to process. You can give hints and prod them, but allow them to think through what these words mean in the modern context.

NEXT, when you feel like they have a good understanding of what this passage is saying, make it personal. After all, this passage is a personal testimony of David. Say:

- **Take a few minutes to write specific ways God has provided for your needs in the way the passage states.**
 - *Have a few personal examples of your own ready.*
 - For example, when David says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;" share a time when God took care of you even when things seemed darkest.

Allow students a chance to share their responses, if they so choose. Let them know they won't have to share these if they don't want to, but you want them to think of how God has loved them in personal ways.

THEN, after they've taken a few minutes, ask if anyone is willing to share. If not, that's OK but don't let the opportunity to build community and closeness in the group pass by without trying. Once everyone is done sharing, ask questions like:

- **How do you feel knowing the God of the universe loves you so much to lavish that much care on you?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **Considering God loves everyone the same way, how does this change how we view others?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

NEXT, explain that service is all about showing God's love to others. Get two volunteers to read Deuteronomy 15:7-11 and 1 John 3:17-19. While the students are turning to these verses, explain a little of the historical context using the Bible Background. When students have finished reading, ask:

- **Define what it means being poor or in need.**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **Why are the poor or in need important to God?**
 - *Answer:* Because they have nowhere to turn, no one to defend them.
- **How does God want us to help those in need according to these verses?**
 - *Answer:* He wants us to be willing to give our own possessions, love with actions.
- **Why are actions more important than words?**
 - *Answer:* Actions are real. They make a difference. They often have much more impact, especially to the poor, than mere words.
- **Where do you see people in need around you now?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, really get them to think about where they see people in need. Depending on your circumstances, your students might be surrounded by need or think they're untouched by it. The truth it's that they're surrounded by need, they just need their eyes opened to it. If your students don't think there are people in need around them, share a simple statistic with them: Across the country, 1 in 5 teens will go to bed hungry tonight. Say:

- **That means that there may be people you pass in your school who will go to bed hungry. We are surrounded by hurting people, and we need to help them.**

FINALLY, have the students turn to 1 Peter 4:10. Ask:

- **What are we supposed to use to serve others according to this verse?**
 - *Answer:* Whatever gifts we have received, the strength that God provides.
- **Why is it important to use the gifts we've received?**
 - Answers will vary, but lead students to see that this is precisely the reason we've been given these gifts.
- **According to this verse, why do we serve others?**
 - *Answer:* To bring praise and glory to God.
- **How does serving others bring God praise and glory?**
 - Answers will vary, but if service is done in God's name, it obviously brings glory to Him. Furthermore, He is glorified when we are obedient and follow His commands.

Remind students that when we love others, we are both demonstrating our love of God and God's love of those we're serving. It is an awesome gift we can give. If there are no comments or questions, transition to The Last Word.

The Last Word

- **Goal:** The goal for this section is for students to begin viewing others the way God views them, and let their actions match that view.
- **Set up:** Bring back the 10 pictures of people you had in the lead in. Preview the following YouTube clip and arrange to show it:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAIE2EnUP5A>
 - If you're unable to access the link, simply search for Audio Adrenaline's song, "Kings And Queens."

FIRST, start the discussion by getting students to review what our motivations for service should be. Ask,

- **What are wrong motivations for service?**
 - *Answer:* Guilt, duty, etc
- **What should motivate our service?**
 - *Answer:* God's love, bringing Him glory, because people matter to God, and so on.

THEN, bring up the activity from the lead in where they "ranked" people according to their value. Ask them to remember what their criteria was to rank them, how they viewed them as valuable. Say:

- **You each had different reasons for ranking the people the way you did. This was more than a discussion starter, though. You do the same thing in your everyday life. You might not rank people, but you give them a value based on a whole host of worldly criteria: how they look, their wealth, their talents and abilities, etc. Then you treat them accordingly.**
- Show the pictures again, and say: **Has your view of the value of these people changed? How?**
 - *Answers will vary*

FINALLY, play the Audio Adrenaline video. As the lead in, say:

- **Listen to the lyrics of this video** (if you want, search for and print up the lyrics for the students to read). **As you listen, think about all those in need around you. Think about how valuable they are to God – they’re children of the King!**

Once the video finishes, close in prayer.

- Don’t forget to distribute the “Service Lesson 1” devotions to your students. If you’re printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you’re texting a link, posting them on Facebook, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Consider texting students a couple of times during the week to encourage them to follow through with reading the 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.

