

HEARTS FOR SERVICE...

PART ONE: PREPARATION AND PURPOSE

Participation in service events is a wonderful way for teens to think outside of their own needs, contribute to communities, and grow closer to other students. However, it is important for them to understand why they are serving. Outreach opportunities should be intentional and connected to the Gospel. Youth should not simply pick up trash or prepare a shelter meal for the sake of "doing a good deed," but should be encouraged to approach service with purpose and a heart to honor God by loving others.

Lesson Focus:

In this study, teens will consider what it means to serve, and why serving is an important component of our lives as Christians. Students will examine Scripture to discuss the meaning of serving others as though working for God. This lesson is intended to be completed prior to participation in a servant event, to prepare hearts and minds for work.

*Note: specifics of lesson details will vary, depending on the size and dynamics of the group and what specific service event is taking place. Please adjust accordingly. (Total time: approximately 45-50 minutes.)

Opening Activity Suggestions: (5-10 minutes)

Open the study with an exploration of what servanthood means. If time and resources allow, consider a fun and energetic introduction game of "server relay": split students into teams and instruct them to race relay-style back and forth across the room. Each team will have a small tray, and will be racing to pick up food-related items (fake food, boxes, snacks) from across the room, challenging themselves to carry as much at a time as possible without dropping it.

- Discuss what it means to serve. Look at dictionary definitions of "serve," "service," and "servant." How do these relate to serving God?
- Invite student to think about circumstances where people act as servants or provide service. Consider traditional forms of servitude as well as restaurant servers, customer service, or how we are called to be servants of Christ.

Scripture Exploration: (15-20 minutes)

Split students into pairs or groups, depending on how many students are present. Provide each group with a Bible passage to review. Encourage students to consider how each passage relates to the concept of serving. Suggested verses include:

- Philippians 2:1-11 (Follow the example of Jesus, the ultimate model of humility and selfless service.)
- 1 John 4:19-21 (We love because God loved us first. God's love leads us to love others.)
- Galatians 1:10 (We are servants of Christ and seek to please God rather than man.)

- Mark 10:42-45 (The greatest must be the least; Jesus came not to be served but to give His life for others.)
- Colossians 3:17 (Do all things as working for the Lord, and not man.)
- John 15:5-12 (We are to abide in Christ as branches on the vine, and follow His commands to love one another as He loved us.)

After allowing time for students to study their verses, bring youth back together and have groups share what they learned from God's Word. Encourage youth to consider both what God wants from us and how we struggle to live up to it as Christians.

Discussion and Application: (10-15 minutes)

Have students consider how their acts of service are connected to their faith, and how they can maintain attitudes of genuine love overflowing from God and purpose in the Gospel while serving.

- On our own, do we usually want to serve others or ourselves?
We don't always serve others the way we should. Remind them it is God working through us that allows us to serve others in His name.
- What can happen if service isn't connected to God's love and God working through us?
Service can easily become about us and making us feel good. If we aren't abiding in God and working for God, our focus can become about ourselves. Take some time to consider times where we need to ask for forgiveness for how we have handled service poorly.
- Why do you think God values service?
God has given us one another to build up and support; He wants us to love and serve others.
- What is the purpose of this servant event?
Consider the specific details of this event and why students will be participating in it.
- How will this act of service demonstrate God's love to others?
- How can all things that we do ultimately serve God?
Colossians 3:17 addresses this in particular.

Conclusion:

Remind students that our lives should be lived in devotion to Christ. Because we are Baptized Children of God, we can shine God's love to others and point them back to Christ. When we fail, God offers us forgiveness. Whatever we do and however we do it, we need to act with the needs of others in mind before our own recognition or reward. Challenge students to find ways to genuinely serve the teens around them, as well as those who will be blessed by the activities of the group.

Close with a word of prayer. You may have students take turns praying, if they are willing, or see if one student leader would be open to praying. Pray specifically for the team that will be going out to serve, and for those who will benefit from the activities of the service crew.