

The JOY of Living Love

LCMS SERVANT EVENT **BIBLE STUDY**



“Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!”

(Psalm 100:1-2 ESV)

 **THE**
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod
Youth Ministry

Introduction

In this series of Bible studies, we will review five scriptural stories of people who were called out of some particular place or situation by God and into service to Him and to others.

Day 1 Bible Study:

The Runaway Son – Luke 15:11-32

Day 2 Bible Study:

The Rich Young Man – Mark 10:17-31

Day 3 Bible Study:

The Calling of Levi (Matthew) – Mark 2:13-17

Day 4 Bible Study:

A Visit to Mary and Martha – Luke 10:38-42

Day 5 Bible Study:

The Good Samaritan – Luke 10:25-37

Although these stories may be familiar to you, you will be encouraged to look and pray for new insights and new ways of applying the truths contained in these stories to your own life and calling to be God's servant. As you read and listen ask yourself:

- What do I share in common with the people in these stories?
- How are their calls to serve like mine?
- How do these stories relate to my participation in this servant event and beyond?

The goal, above all, is that you will come face to face each day in these pages of Scripture with Christ Himself who says both as our Savior and Teacher:

“But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43-45 ESV).

The Runaway Son

Talk Among Yourselves

Have you ever run away from home? Once upon a time when I was about 12, I got so mad at my parents (I don't remember why), I decided that enough was enough. I packed a lunch, hopped on my bicycle and said goodbye to home forever ... or at least for a few hours. As late afternoon turned to evening on that chilly day in February, I realized from my seat on the school playground merry-go-round that my plan to leave home forever had a few holes in it. What was I going to eat now that my lunch was gone? Where was I going to sleep? And who was going to take care of my paper route the next morning? Somewhat sheepishly, I headed back home only to discover that nobody in the family even realized I had "run away" in the first place. Talk about a humbling (humiliating!) experience.

Of course, running away can be a much more serious (and dangerous) matter. Some teenage runaways have had tragic, life-threatening (even life-destroying) experiences. Today's Bible study focuses on a story Jesus told about a young man who ran away from home and *almost* ruined his life forever. But ...

Read the Story for Yourselves

Read the story of "The Runaway Son" (usually called "The Lost Son" or "The Prodigal Son") from Luke 15:11-32. You may want to take turns reading to get everyone more involved in the story as it unfolds.

Spend a few minutes just talking about the story as a group. What one thing in particular "jumped out" at you as you heard and read this familiar story once again?

For further discussion, use the following questions and observations:

1. It isn't completely clear from this story exactly why the younger son left. Are there any hints in the story that might help explain this? Do you have any ideas of your own?

2. Re-read verse 13 and complete the following sentence: "In my opinion, the younger son was really _____." What specific activities do you think his wild living might have involved? (See, for example, verse 30.)

3. According to verses 15-16, where did the runaway son end up? If this story were "modernized" for today's society, what are some of the jobs or situations we might use to describe how or where he ended up?

4. Re-read verse 17. What do you think brought the younger son back to his senses? What facial expression would you use to convey the exact moment when his brain returned to functioning properly?

5. Look again at verses 18-19. Do you think the son is really and truly sorry for what he has done or is he just motivated by selfish desperation? Explain your answer. Does verse 21 help us in answering this question?

6. What word does the Bible often use to describe a person's recognition of his or her wrong and foolish behavior and the desire to turn one's life around? (See, for example, Luke 5:32.)

7. Look carefully at verses 20-24 and make a list of all the things the father did that showed how much he loved his long-lost son. Did the son deserve this kind of love? How do you think the son reacted to his father's outpouring of love? Try to put yourself in the father's shoes for a moment. Do you think you would have responded this way?

8. Review verses 25-31. What was the older son's reaction to his brother's return home? Do you think this reaction was justified? Do you think you would have felt the same way? Do you think the father was showing favoritism to the younger son or was his reaction right and fair? (Note the father's response to the older son in verses 31-32.)

Apply the Story to Yourself 

Obviously, Jesus didn't tell this story merely to entertain us. He told this story to teach us some very important truths about ourselves and about our relationship with God and others. Before discussing the questions below, jot down group members' answers to the question, "What do *you* think Jesus is trying to teach us through this story?"

Each of us has some very important things in common with the runaway son. Use the verses listed below to unscramble the garbled words. Then spend some time discussing the questions that follow.

9. Like the runaway son, each of us is a "**roop slime-bear niners.**" (Rom. 3:23)

10. Why is it so important to understand this core Scriptural truth? Without getting too personal, share one or two specific ways in which God has helped you see and understand the seriousness of your sinful condition. Do you think most people

today see themselves as “sinners” in need of God’s help and salvation? Discuss.

11. Like the runaway son, we are all God’s “**ricesoup, vofinger endlihr**” through faith in Jesus Christ. (1 John 2:12; 3:1)

12. Name one Scripture passage, person or experience that God has used recently to help you better understand His overwhelming and all-forgiving love for you in Christ.

13. Like the runaway son, we are all called to respond to God’s gracious love in Christ by “**gervsin, volnig and gingivrof rotshe**” as He has first done for us. (Eph. 4:32-5:1)

14. We aren’t told in Luke 15 specifically how the runaway son responded to his father’s forgiving love in the weeks and months following his return home. Do you think there was a change in his attitude? In his relationship with his father? In his relationship with his older brother? Do you think everybody lived “happily ever after” or do you think they still have to work through some family struggles and squabbles?

15. Are there people in your life right now whom you find easy to love, serve and forgive? Why? Are there people whom you find it difficult to love, serve and forgive? Why?

16. Read Eph. 5:1 one more time. Then, read 1 John 4:7-12; 19-21. What motivates and empowers us as Christians in our daily struggle to love and serve others?

17. Name one thing that you learned in this Bible study that will help you to be a better “servant” to others this week and in the weeks to come.

Closing

Allow a few moments of silence at the end of the study for each person to compose a brief prayer thanking God for His undeserved love and forgiveness in Christ, and for God’s help in loving, serving and forgiving the specific “others” whom God brings into each of our lives. Provide an opportunity for those who wish to do so to share their prayer aloud.

Close by singing “Amazing Grace” (*All God’s People Sing* [AGPS] 63, *Lutheran Service Book* [LSB] 744).

The Rich Young Man

Talk Among Yourselves

In his short story, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?," Russian author Leo Tolstoy tells the tale of a once-contented farmer named Pahom who, tempted by the devil, becomes obsessed with his "need" for more and more land. The farmer's craving finally leads him to the distant lands of certain nomadic chieftains who offer him a deal that sounds too good to be true. In exchange for a rather modest fee, they promise to give him as much land as he can surround by walking in one day. There is only one catch: If he fails to return to his starting point by the time the sun sets, he will lose both the land and his money.

The next day at sunrise, Pahom sets out in the presence of the chieftains, eager to encompass as much of the rich and fertile land as he possibly can. The further he walks, the better the land looks. So, with one eye on the sun, he keeps marking out a larger and larger tract of land. As the day wears on and the sun begins to sink, Pahom grows tired, thirsty, hungry, sore and weak. He begins to worry that he may not have the strength or the time to make it back to the starting point by sunset. He may lose all that he set out to gain. Straining and struggling with all of his might, Pahom runs and stumbles and scratches his way back to where he began, collapsing at the feet of the chieftains just as the last glimmer of sunlight fades below the horizon. He has made it! The land is his! But as the chieftains applaud his effort, the farmer's servant makes a shocking discovery: Pahom is dead.

The story ends: "His servant picked up the spade and dug a grave long enough for Pahom to lie in and buried him in it. Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed."

What is the "moral" of this story? *(Take turns answering this question in your group.)*

Today's Bible story centers on a young man who was also caught up in the deceptive and dangerous "rat race" for "more." This man was very wealthy, influential and successful, and apparently, very miserable. He had achieved impressive earthly goals but somehow along the way, he had lost sight of the most important goal of all. Jesus tried to help get him back on the right track, but ...

Read the Story for Yourselves

Read the account of "The Rich Young Man" recorded in Mark 10:17-31. *(If time allows, consider comparing Mark's version of the text with the parallel accounts in Matt. 19:16-30 and Luke 18:18-30).* Before moving ahead to the discussion questions below, take turns completing the following sentence: "What I find most meaningful (or troublesome or comforting or confusing) about this story is ..."

Although Mark does not tell us exactly who this rich man was, Luke 18:18 says that he was a "ruler" (probably some kind of high-ranking government official). Matt. 19:20 adds another detail by telling us that he was "young." He had achieved great earthly success at a surprisingly early age.

1. Can you think of some "young people" in today's society who have become very wealthy, famous and successful? How have they handled their success so far? Would you like to trade places with them? Why or why not?

2. What question did this "rich young ruler" ask Jesus (verse 17)? What does this question tell us about him? Do you think he was trying to fool or impress Jesus or do you think he was seriously interested in Jesus' answer to this question? (Give the reason(s) for your answer.)

3. Why do you think Jesus says what He says in verse 18? Was Jesus upset about being called “good”?

4. What do you think of Jesus’ response in verse 19? Is Jesus suggesting the key to inheriting eternal life is keeping the commandments? If not, why does Jesus point this man to the commandments?

5. How does this man respond to Jesus’ words (verse 20)? What does this response tell us about him? Do you think this answer pleased Jesus? Why or why not? If not, what answer do you think Jesus wanted to hear?

6. Which commandment is the “key” to all the other commandments? (For a hint, see Matt. 22:37-38.) Re-read verses 21-22. On the basis of these verses, what would you say was this man’s “god”? What was Jesus’ attitude toward this proud, self-centered, materialistic (and sad and searching) young man? (See verse 21.)

7. The Bible doesn’t tell us the rest of the story. It doesn’t tell us what happened to this young man in the days and months and years after he walked away from Jesus. In your opinion, is there any reason to hope that this story finally had a happy ending? Explain your answer.

Apply the Story to Yourselves 

1. Reflect again on Tolstoy’s story, “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” Why do you think it is so easy for people to get caught up in the “rat race” or desire for more money and more “stuff”? How does today’s world try to fool us into thinking that the key to happiness is to have more and more money and more and more “things”? (Be specific!) Do you ever catch yourself getting caught up in this “worldly” way of thinking? (Give specific examples.)

2. Re-read Mark 10:23-25. What do you think Jesus means by these words? Are these words of warning intended only for millionaires like Donald Trump or do they also apply to us? If so, how?

3. The following sentences are incorrect as written. Use the Bible passages listed to correct each sentence. Then, spend a few minutes discussing what was wrong about the original sentence and what is right about the revised sentence.

“Money is the root of all evil.” (1 Tim. 6:10; Heb. 13:5)

“You cannot serve God and have money at the same time.” (Matt. 6:24)

“People who are rich will fall into spiritual destruction.” (1 Tim. 6:9)

4. Do you have to be “rich” to love money or can a “poor person” be as greedy as a “rich person”? What is the solution to the universal human problem of greed and materialism? (See Mark 10:26-27). How has God accomplished the impossible in the lives of His followers? (Read, for example, Eph. 2:1-10.)

5. Note Jesus’ promise to the rich man in verse 21 and His promise to the disciples in verses 29-30. Now read Matt. 6:19-21. What are some of the heavenly treasures that belong to those who trust in Jesus? Who paid for these treasures and how? (See 2 Cor. 8:9 and review Luther’s explanation to the second article of the Creed.) List as many ways as you can that these heavenly treasures are superior to earthly wealth and treasure.

6. Sometimes we say, “I *need* this or that,” when we really mean, “I *want* this or that.” What’s the difference between our “wants” and our “needs”? What, according to the Bible, is our greatest need of all? (Check Luke 12:16-21). What promise does God give us regarding our *needs*? (See Phil. 4:19.)

7. A rich and famous singer/actress (who dubbed herself “The Material Girl”) was once asked for her opinion on a variety of subjects. When asked her opinion on happiness, she said, “I don’t know anyone who’s happy.” Compare her answer to the reaction of the rich young man in Mark 10:22. What is the solution to the sadness and joylessness of life in today’s world? What is not the solution? How can we share this solution with others?

8. Jesus doesn’t necessarily ask each of us, like He asked the rich young man, to sell everything we have before following Him. But following Jesus does give us a whole new perspective on how to view and use our money and possessions. What do the following passages teach us about how Christ’s followers are to regard and use their earthly wealth and possessions? (See Mark 10:21; 1 Tim. 6:17-19; Phil. 4:12-13; 2 Cor. 9:10-13; and James 2:14-17.)

9. Read the final verse of today’s Bible story again (verse 31). Is this a warning, a promise or a combination of both?

10. Share *one* meaningful insight that you gained from today’s study. Tell how it connects with your participation in this servant event.

Closing

As a closing prayer, read and reflect on the song, “I’d Rather Have Jesus” by Rhea F. Miller, 1922.

I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold,
I’d rather have His than have riches untold.
I’d rather have Jesus than houses or land,
I’d rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.

Than to be the king of a vast domain
Or be held in sin’s dread sway
I’d rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.

I’d rather have Jesus than men’s applause
I’d rather be faithful to His dear cause
I’d rather have Jesus than worldwide fame
I’d rather be true to His holy name.

He’s fairer than lilies of rarest bloom,
He’s sweeter than honey from out of the comb
He’s all that my hungering spirit needs,
I’d rather have Jesus and let Him lead.

Close by singing together “Christ Be My Leader” (AGPS 81, LSB 861).

The Calling of Levi (Matthew)

Talk Among Yourselves

Imagine for a moment that you were offered a job as a tollbooth clerk in the middle of nowhere on some interstate highway. The pay is fabulous but there's on catch: You have to agree to remain at the same job for all of your live-long (working) days. Would you take the job? In trying to come to a decision, what would you list as some of the pros and cons of a job like this?

One of the words that probably showed up on the con side of your list is the word "lonely." Imagine spending every day cooped up in a tiny little booth with no one around with whom you can talk, laugh, eat, or share your thoughts and problems. Your only interaction with people comes during that brief moment when you collect their money. It's not exactly the best opportunity for forming deep and lasting personal relationships.

In today's Bible story we meet a tollbooth worker whose life was probably quite boring, depressing and lonely despite the considerable financial rewards that he undoubtedly reaped from his work. Then, one day Jesus came along ...

Read the Story for Yourselves

Read the story of the calling of Levi (Matthew) in Mark 2:13-17. Take a few moments to compare the brief parallel accounts in Matt. 9:9-13 and Luke 5:27-32. Before moving ahead to the following questions, take turns completing the following sentence: "I think Jesus called Matthew to follow Him because ..."

The Bible doesn't give us many details about Levi's life before he met Jesus. But from what we know about tax collecting and tax collectors at the time of Jesus, we can make a few educated guesses.

For example, Jewish tax collectors were typically regarded as traitors and outcasts by their own people, since they collected taxes from their (often poor) fellow countrymen to support the hated Roman government and the Romans' (usually rich) nobles and officials. So despised were tax collectors by their own people that they were barred from serving as judges or even witnesses in a trial. They also were expelled from the synagogue (the Jewish center for worship). Even the families of tax collectors were often shunned and rejected.

1. Have you ever felt like an "outcast," like you were not wanted or accepted by a certain group of people (at school, at work, or even in your church or family)? Briefly describe the situation and tell how you felt. How did you handle the situation? What did you learn from the experience?

2. Why do you think Jesus would call a "traitor" and probable "cheater" like Matthew (or Zacchaeus) to be His follower? (Hint: See Luke 19:10 and Mark 2:17.) How does the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14 help us understand the reason why Jesus came? What is required of those who want to follow Jesus?

3. Now it's time for a tough personal question: Have you ever lied, cheated or been dishonest in any way? What comfort and encouragement do you find in the story of Matthew's call? According to 1 John 1:8-2:2 what's the right way (and the wrong way) to handle sin in our life?

4. Mark and Luke use the name Levi to refer to the tax collector in our story while Matthew uses the name Matthew in telling the story of his call to follow Jesus. Many commentators believe that Levi was Matthew's given name while "Matthew" (which means "gift of God") was a new name chosen by Matthew the apostle or even by Jesus Himself in response to Matthew's new life in Christ. Why do you think Matthew preferred this name over the name Levi? In what sense are we all "Matthews"? (See, for example, Romans 6:23.)

5. True or False: According to this story, the Pharisees were delighted that Jesus was able to convince Matthew to give up his "dirty job" as a tax collector and do something more constructive with his life.

How did the Pharisees respond to Jesus' association with Matthew? What did Jesus say to the Pharisees? What was Jesus trying to help the Pharisees to see?

6. When Matthew left his "tollbooth" behind and followed Jesus, his life changed forever in all kinds of ways. Matthew said goodbye to a life of wealth and ease but he also said goodbye to a life of isolation and loneliness. He was now part of a "family" of believers in Christ and followers of Christ. What did the members of this "family" have in common according to verse 17? How does Jesus describe his "family" in Matt. 12:46-50? What is "the will of the Father," according to John 6:39-40? (See also John 6:29.)

Apply the Story to Yourselves

1. Martin Luther liked to compare the church to a hospital. How do Jesus' words in verse 17 support this comparison? Make a list of as many similarities as you can think of between a church and a hospital. How do you fit into this picture? How might this picture of the church as a hospital affect the way we reach out to others who are still outside the church?

The family that Matthew joined when he followed Jesus had some very important things in common:

- Each member was a "lost and condemned" sinner.
- Each was "found" and saved by Jesus.
- Each had begun a brand new life and wanted to share the Good News of that new life with others.

But the individual members of this family also were very different from each other.

- Each member had a different background.
- Each had different experiences.
- Each had different gifts and talents to use in service to the Master.

2. Read 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 12-31. According to St. Paul, how and when did we become members of Christ's family? (See verse 13.) Does our oneness as a family in Christ mean that we are all supposed to be and act the same? Why do you think God made us different from each other? How are we to use our differences? What is the key to living together in harmony and unity in the church? (Read 1 Cor. 13:1-13.)

3. Do you think there are people in the church who are still lonely, who don't feel that they really belong or are a part of the family?

Without naming names, try to describe some of the people in your congregation who you think might feel isolated, unloved or unwanted. Why do you think they feel this way? What can we do to make these people feel more at home and accepted?

4. Read Rom. 12 verse by verse as a group. Make a list of what you think are the top 10 helpful suggestions contained in this chapter for living together as God's family in response to His grace in Christ Jesus in ways that please Him and build one another up.

5. Has participation in this servant event helped you grow in your appreciation of what it means to be a part of God's family? How?

Has this experience provided opportunities for living out some of Paul's words of encouragement in Rom. 12? How?

Closing

Close by taking turns speaking a two-sentence prayer that begins:

“Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for showing me through this Bible study that ...”

“Help me to live out what I have learned by ...”

Then, sing together “Take My Life, O Lord, Renew” (AGPS 223) or “Father Welcomes” (AGPS 95, LSB 605).

A Visit to Mary and Martha

Talk Among Yourselves

Perhaps you, like me, are one of those “task-oriented” people who are constantly making to-do lists. If so, you know from experience that just because a job is on the list doesn’t mean it will get done quickly (or at all). (As some wise person once said, “Anyone can do any amount of work provided it isn’t the work he is *supposed* to be doing at that moment.”) Still, to-do lists can help us to remember some of the things that need to be done and help nudge us to come up with some kind of semi-organized plan of attack for getting them done.

Often the hardest part of making those lists is *prioritizing* the various tasks that need to be completed. Which one is the most urgent or important? Which one should be listed second, third, fourth or last? How many times have you made a to-do list and then started with the last or least important item because that one was the easiest to accomplish?

If you had to make a to-do list right now of some of the things you need to accomplish when you return home from this servant event, what items would it include? Which one would you list as your top priority?

Today’s Bible story is about a hardworking, well-intentioned, task-oriented young woman who *thought* she had her priorities straight. But Jesus had other ideas ...

Read the Story for Yourselves

Read the account of Jesus’ visit to the home of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42. Before moving on to the questions below, take turns completing the following sentence: “In my opinion, the main point of this Bible story is ...”

1. Martha was gracious enough to “open her home” to Jesus (Verse 38), who (as Verse 38 makes clear) was not alone but was accompanied by His disciples. Assuming that Martha’s offer of hospitality extended also to the disciples, write down some of the things you think might have been on Martha’s to-do list after welcoming these tired, dusty and hungry travelers into her home.

It’s easy to be somewhat sympathetic toward Martha as we read this story and join her in being a little irritated with Mary. After all there was a lot of work to be done and somebody had to do it! Jesus’ response to Martha, however, shows that there is more to this story than first meets the eye. Jesus’ words show that He was actually very concerned about Martha and her spiritual (and emotional) health.

2. How do the following words of Martha (see verse 40) give us some “hints” about her unhealthy attitude toward Mary, Jesus and herself?

“Lord, do you not care ...?”

“my sister has left me ...”

“to serve alone ...”

“Tell her then to help me!”

3. How does Jesus “diagnose” Martha’s problem in verse 41? What specific words does He use to describe her? How might we describe in today’s language Martha’s personality or state of mind as depicted in this story?

4. What did Jesus recommend as a top priority solution for Martha’s stress, anger, frustration and anxiety? (See verses 39 and 42.) Was Jesus saying that what Martha was doing was wrong or unimportant? What was He saying? Do you think the work would have still gotten done if Martha had sat down with Mary at Jesus feet? Explain your answer.

Apply the Story to Yourselves

1. Based on the sketchy “portrait” of these two women given us in this text, would you say that you have more in common with Mary or with Martha? Why?

2. In your opinion, are the following statements true or false? Share and discuss the answers that emerge from your group.

T or F This story teaches us that it is always more pleasing to God to read your Bible than it is to clean your room or do the dishes.

T or F According to Jesus, Martha was a worse sinner than Mary.

T or F The greatest need of every person is to receive the spiritual food that Jesus offers through His Word and Sacraments.

T or F Spending time with Jesus and His Word will help us to worry less, keep our priorities straight, and serve others more willingly and cheerfully.

3. Can our service to others ever become wrong and sinful? If so, when and how can this happen? How can we keep it from happening? (See Heb. 12:2-3.)

4. Discuss the following sentence: “The key to serving others is being served by Jesus.” What do the following passages teach us about how Jesus has and still does serve us? See John 13:1-17; John 10:14-18; Luke 22:14-20, 24-27; Heb. 10:25, 4:12, 4:14-16; and 1 John 4:19-21.

5. Read what Jesus has to say about worry and anxiety in Matt. 6:25-34. What do you find most meaningful, comforting and encouraging about these words of Jesus?

6. What have you learned this week about priorities? About trusting Jesus to meet your needs? About the importance of staying close to Jesus by listening to His Word and speaking to Him in prayer?

Closing 

Ask the person on your right, “What are you worried about these days?” Offer a prayer for him or her, asking Jesus to bring calm and comfort through His Word and Spirit. Then, share a worry of yours with that person, asking him or her to offer a prayer for you. Finally, read Phil. 4:4-7 together as a group.

Close by singing “Seek Ye First” (AGPS 207, LSB 605).

The Good Samaritan

Talk Among Yourselves

We all have our own comfort zones or places where we feel relaxed and at home. These are places where we can be with people who like us just the way we are and who are like us in many ways. There are also, for all of us, places where we are not very comfortable and people with whom (given a choice) we would rather not associate.

Name one of your favorite comfort zones. What makes this place so comfortable for you?

Briefly share an experience that made you feel extremely uncomfortable. Why did you feel that way? How did you deal with the situation? What, if anything, did you learn from the experience?

In today's Bible story, we will encounter several individuals who were called to venture out of their comfort zones to serve God and their neighbor in a challenging, risky, out-of-the-ordinary way. One of these individuals answered the call with great courage, grace and generosity. As for the others ...

Read the Story for Yourselves

Read the parable of "The Good Samaritan" as told by Jesus in Luke 10:25-37. Although the story may be familiar to you, pay close attention as you read and listen for fresh and new insight or understandings. Name one thing in this story that made a special impression on you as you listened and read this time around.

1. Although this may be a familiar story, it is easy to miss the story's main point. Why, according to verse 29, did the expert of the Law ask Jesus the question, "Who is my neighbor?" What was wrong with this man's attitude?

2. It seems clear from verses 25-29 that the Law expert was confident that he would "inherit eternal life" because of his love for God and his neighbor. In his mind, however, the word "neighbor" included only those within his own comfort zone — people of his own family, race and religion, people whom he liked and who were like him. What do you think Jesus was trying to show this man through this story? What do you think Jesus was trying to get this man to do? What is the main point of this story?

Once we understand Jesus' main point in telling this story, we also can read this story as a beautiful illustration of how, by God's grace, we can love and joyfully serve others — even those outside our comfort zone.

3. How did the priest and Levite respond to the challenge and opportunity to help someone in need? Why do you think they responded this way?

4. Make a list of all the things the Samaritan did to care for the robbed and beaten man. Why would Jesus' listeners be shocked by this story?

5. Take turns filling in the blanks, "According to this parable, my neighbor is _____, which even includes _____ and _____."

Apply the Story to Yourselfes 

1. After reading the story of the Good Samaritan, how would you react to the following sentence?

"My loving and sacrificial service to my neighbors through this servant event has helped to earn me a place in the kingdom of heaven."

2. How would you revise the sentence above to reflect what Jesus teaches us in this story?

3. Have your experiences this week helped to stretch your comfort zone? If so, how? What new neighbors have you met and served? How have you been served by others? What risks did you take while you were here? What sacrifices did you make to be here? Would you do it again? Would you encourage others to do it?

4. How do we sometimes build barriers between ourselves and those who are different from us in some way or another? How did God deal with the barrier separating us from Him? (See Eph. 2:11-18 and 1 Peter 2:24-25). How do Paul's words in Col. 3:11-14 guide us in our efforts to remove sinful barriers between ourselves and others?

5. How does the story of the Good Samaritan end? How do these words of Jesus apply to your own life back home — to a specific person or situation challenging you to move outside your comfort zone?

Closing

Share with the other members of the group:

1. The *one* most important or memorable thing you learned from this week's Bible study.
2. The *one* most exciting or memorable experience you had this week as you participated in this servant event.
3. The *one* greatest challenge you will face — with God's help — when you return home from this event.

Join hands and allow each member of the group to offer a prayer thanking God for what has been learned this week, the growth that has taken place, and/or special needs and requests for the days and weeks ahead.

Close by singing "Make Me a Servant" (AGPS 174, *Singing Saints Songbook* 20) twice.