

# A CALL TO SERVICE



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.

# MAKING FAITH MATTER PUBLISHING

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# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Introduction to the Facilitator's Guide

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Dear Facilitator:

The Facilitator's Guide for MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service includes both the facilitation notes and the workbook content. The facilitation content is located after the Appendix section at the end of the workbook and each page has the dark gray border at the top like the one above.

Also, inside the back cover you'll find a DVD containing the video introductions for each session.

Along the way, please contact Charlie Stuart with any questions, comments or ideas for improving the effectiveness of MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service. You can reach Charlie at (407) 230-2125 or [Charlie.Stuart@MakingFaithMatter.org](mailto:Charlie.Stuart@MakingFaithMatter.org).

Thank you for your involvement in leading followers of Christ from believers to doers of His good works.



# T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

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Forward & About the Authors	i
Introduction	1
<b>1 Here &amp; Now, There &amp; Later</b> Becoming the Kingdom of God on Earth	11
<b>2 God’s Performance System</b> Choices Have Consequences	25
<b>3 God’s Target Audience</b> Identifying the “Lease of These”	43
<b>4 The Master Example</b> How We Are to Serve	63
<b>5 Finding Your Service Sweet Spot</b> Matching Passion with Opportunity	89
<b>6 Participating in the Public Square</b> Serving by Being the Voice of the Voiceless	111
<b>7 Solutions vs. Shouting Matches</b> Speaking Truth in Love	139
Appendix	163



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# F O R W A R D

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By Charlie Stuart



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## Let's just imagine.

*Let's just imagine for a moment what might happen in our family, community, nation, and world if all believers helped usher in the Kingdom of God on earth!*

*When more people embrace their role in the Kingdom of God here on earth, their minds, eyes, ears, hands, feet and voice will be used to reflect their faith.*

*They will use their eyes to look for needs that are unmet, and to watch over those in positions of authority.*

*They will use their ears to listen for the cries of those in pain, and to hear and address the comments that demean those in need.*

*They will use their mind to think of ways to get involved, and to question for themselves what God would have them do for Him.*

*They will use their hands to do what is needed, remembering that it is through their hands that Jesus touches the "least of these."*

*They will use their feet to go where needed – overseas, across the street or into the voting booth – to bring the Kingdom of God to those in need.*

*They will use their voice to speak up and out for those without voice, and to hold those with power accountable to remember "the least of these" when making decisions.*

*Wouldn't it be lovely to live in a nation like that!?!*



# A CALL TO SERVICE

## **With our lives. In our communities. Through our churches.**

Welcome to MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service! We are grateful God led you this way. This promises to be a time of Bible study, discussion and reflection that could change your life as we learn how to be the Kingdom of God on earth!

Special Note: While this study is designed for the “believer” – already a follower of Christ – you are most welcome to join us wherever you are on your spiritual journey. There will be opportunities for you to hear God’s good news during this course!

### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service! is a production of Making Faith Matter, Inc., a non-profit 501c3 organization founded by Charlie & Barbara Stuart. Making Faith Matter’s mission is to help faith organizations make a strategic shift so the needs of their congregants and community in the new era – for meaning and hope – will be met, resulting in higher levels of giving and volunteering both inside and outside the walls of the organization. Charlie can be reached at: [Charlie.Stuart@MakingFaithMatter.org](mailto:Charlie.Stuart@MakingFaithMatter.org) or 407.230.2125.

**Charlie & Barbara Stuart** collaborated in researching and writing most of MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service!

**Charlie** was raised in the church by faithful, loving parents who lived lives of service to others for Charlie and his five siblings to see and emulate. He has served as Deacon, adult Bible study leader (20+ years), pastor search



committee member, and in many other leadership roles. Charlie has also volunteered for 25+years with the YMCA as a local board member, on national task forces for the YMCA of the USA, and as a speaker and consultant on membership, philanthropy and mission. Charlie is a business consultant, author and professional speaker on marketing and sales. His clients included businesses, associations and not-for-profit organizations across the

## Forward



United States and Canada. A graduate of the University of Florida, Charlie holds a degree in Business and Economics.

**Barbara** recently retired from serving a large, community-based healthcare organization as vice president of marketing, communications, government relations and service excellence. Her first career was with the Walt Disney World company, where she designed and presented seminars including Marketing the Good News about Schools, Communication Disney Style and the Disney Approach to People Management. A graduate of the University of Florida, she holds degrees in Journalism and Political Science. In addition to helping launch the Making Faith Matter initiative, Barbara works part-time as a leadership and business consultant.

The church and its mission have been Barbara's core service placement most of her life. For years, she has taught Bible studies, served as a decision counselor, choir member and director, chaired numerous church committees, been a church Trustee, member of a pastor search committee, and a mentor to single moms and couples needing financial guidance. Additionally, she has served on the board of numerous community organizations. Currently, she serves on the Coalition for the Homeless board in Orlando, Florida.

Charlie and his wife, Barbara, have been married 35 years and have three adult children.



# A CALL TO SERVICE

**Chris Fouche** wrote Session 5, “Finding Your Service Sweet Spot” and was a valuable resource in developing MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service!

A graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Florida State University, Chris holds degrees in Divinity and Communication Studies, respectively. He has volunteered as an English for Speakers of Other Languages



teacher, at Give Kids the World, Edgewood Children’s Ranch, and at the House of Hope, where he served as a member of the House of Hope Orlando advisory board.

Chris is passionate about the church, the environment, politics, and music. He is a teacher, a learner, a sometimes writer, a beleaguered Seminoles fan, a husband, and a new father. Above all, he is a child of God’s grace, and that is the driving force of his life. His prayer is that the church would learn and implement new ways to show that grace to a world that is so desperately yearning for it.

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

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By Barbara Stuart

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

*Psalms 82: 3-4*



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Welcome to MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service! We are grateful God led you this way. This promises to be a time of Bible study, discussion and reflection that could change your life as we learn how to be the Kingdom of God on earth! (Note: while this study is designed for the “believer” – a follower of Christ – you are most welcome to join us wherever you are on your spiritual journey. There will be opportunities for you to hear God’s good news during this course!).

As we study the Bible and explore for ourselves what God has to say to us, we will use a **Read → Reflect → Reveal → Record** method:

- ❖ Before reading the scripture, pray that God will open your eyes and give you fresh insights to the Word.
- ❖ Then, **read** the passage two or three times, out loud, **reflecting** on the passage, and ask yourself:

What does this say? What does it mean?

And, what does it mean to me or “so what?”

- ❖ You will probably want to read a few verses before and after the selected passage so that you are reading “in context.”
- ❖ Then, be silent, and let God speak to you...**revealing** the message to you personally.
- ❖ **Record** your thoughts in the space provided.

The overall theme verse for MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service is: “*Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with action and truth.*” (1 John 3:18)  
Take a few minutes now and read and reflect on this verse.

What does it say to you? Then rewrite it in your own words.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## Tips to Get the Most From “A Call to Service”

- ❖ If possible, do this in a small group setting...we learn from each other as well as from the Word of God
- ❖ Complete each session’s homework before going on to the next session.
- ❖ You will find it helpful to use various translations of the Bible.
- ❖ Whereas God’s Word is never failing, He does speak to each of us differently at times – revealing what He would have us personally to know. Therefore, this study will be more about what God has to say to you rather than “right or wrong” answers. Our goal is to make the message simple without stripping it of God’s mystery. So be ready...the course may raise as many questions as it does answers!
- ❖ Be open. So many different variables shape who we are and what we believe: it’s been said that “culture eats strategy for lunch everyday!” This course may cause you to examine some beliefs that you have held for a long time as you compare them to what God is saying to you through His revealed Word. A pastor friend of ours who grew up in the Deep South confessed one day that some of the societal and religious “beliefs” he grew up with were really unfounded biblically – and that he changed his thinking when, as an adult, he examined the Bible for himself, without the cultural filters.
- ❖ As we study, we will refer to the “universal church” meaning all followers of Christ, regardless of their denomination.
- ❖ Although we will discuss the civic responsibilities of Christians, the Making Faith Matter initiative does not advocate one political party or social agenda above another.





# Introduction



13. Most Christians live to please other people more than they live to please God.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
\_\_\_\_\_ Disagree  
Agree

14. I am aware of the status of the “least of these” in my community.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
\_\_\_\_\_ Not at all  
Completely aware

15. American values and Godly values share this common thread; we have a shared responsibility to each other.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
\_\_\_\_\_ Disagree  
Agree

16. The budget of the USA should be a moral document, reflecting how Americans care for the poor and oppressed.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
\_\_\_\_\_ Disagree  
Agree

17. Taking care of the poor and oppressed is the job of government—not churches or believers.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
\_\_\_\_\_ Disagree  
Agree

18. Taking care of the poor and oppressed is the job of believers, not government.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
\_\_\_\_\_ Disagree  
Agree

19. There is a difference between religious practice and public displays of religion.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
\_\_\_\_\_ Disagree  
Agree





## Pre-Test Answer Key

Record your answers from pages 5-8 here, then tear this page out, seal it in an envelope, and keep it in the back of the book. It will be used later in the course.

- |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____  | 13. _____ |
| 2. _____  | 14. _____ |
| 3. _____  | 15. _____ |
| 4. _____  | 16. _____ |
| 5. _____  | 17. _____ |
| 6. _____  | 18. _____ |
| 7. _____  | 19. _____ |
| 8. _____  | 20. _____ |
| 9. _____  | 21. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 22. _____ |
| 11. _____ | 23. _____ |
| 12. _____ | 24. _____ |



# S e s s i o n 1

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## **HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER**

Becoming the Kingdom of God on Earth

By Barbara Stuart

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

*Matthew 6: 9-10*



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## Session 1

# HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER



The disciples asked Jesus – “teach us to pray.” And He taught them a model prayer – it has come to be known as “The Lord’s Prayer” or “our Father” or “Pater noster”.

 ***Read & Reflect: Luke 11:2, Matthew 6: 9-15***

Jesus said “Thy kingdom come...” What is God’s Kingdom?

 ***Read & Reflect: 1 Thessalonians 2:12, Luke 17:20-21, Romans 14:17***

### **“Thy Kingdom Come...”**

The Kingdom of God is one of the major concepts of the Bible and can be studied on many different levels: The broad meaning, the narrow meaning, the inauguration, the continuation, the consummation. In fact, it’s such a massive topic that one pastor friend of ours has launched a 10-year study of what it means to be the Kingdom of God here on earth! We will only touch lightly on this doctrine as a way to introduce the rest of the MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service course content.

What do you think of when you hear the word “kingdom?” In the most literal sense, kingdoms are systems of power and control... economic, political, cultural, or spiritual, and we know that there are many interpretations of the phrase “Kingdom of God.”

There is a story about a group of scientists who visited a tribe in New Guinea that believed their world ended at the edge of a nearby river. One of the scientists had to leave, which involved crossing the river. Once on the other side, he turned around to

# A CALL TO SERVICE

wave to them, but they did not wave back. The tribesmen said they did not see him. Their deeply held beliefs about their world had clouded their perception of reality.

In much the same way, the Israelites had a very hard time grasping the ideas about God's rule as proclaimed by Jesus when He said, "*the kingdom of God is near.*" So deeply entrenched were their beliefs about a king being a powerful ruler with national figurehead status – that they could not see the King as a servant leader.

His Kingdom idea was to make "here and now" (earth) be like "there and later" (heaven). His Kingdom would be a spiritual kingdom – not bound by time or space or geography or people – a virtual Kingdom... whenever and wherever the will of God is being done. And He sent Jesus to earth to usher in that Kingdom.

If you were to read the New Testament for the first time with fresh eyes, we believe it would be obvious to you that ushering in the Kingdom of God was Jesus' number one mission...which included two parts: showing the pathway to eternal life in heaven ("there and later") as well as how to live on earth ("here and now"). He modeled both a personal gospel and a service gospel. He asked people to consider a personal conversion – trusting Him as Savior from the punishment of their wrongdoings, and a service conversion – living a lifestyle of loving, humble service to others. You could say he practiced both "lifestyle evangelism" and "lifestyle service." Both of these together usher in the Kingdom of God. When Jesus commissioned the twelve, He "*sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.*" (Luke 9: 2).

Sadly, a "substitute" Kingdom of God has taken root in many churches and with thousands of believers in the last half-century. It sounds like this: "Here is the minimum criterion for you to get your ticket to heaven and eternal life after you die." You most likely will never hear this "substitute" Kingdom of God said in these words. Jesus certainly never said it! He said, "*Your attitude must be like my own, for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life.*" (Matthew 20:28).

To be clear, faith in Jesus is all that is "required" to set us free from the punishment of sin and give us the free gift of salvation. The book of Ephesians, chapter 2, vs. 8-9 says

## Session 1

# HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER



this very plainly: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

However, ushering in the Kingdom of God does not mean we get to aimlessly loiter around after we profess Christ as Lord. It means that after we profess Him as Lord, we become “ushers” as well – ushering in the Kingdom by doing what Jesus did – *“loving not just with words or tongue but with action and in truth.”* (1 John 3:18).

If this were not the case, Jesus may have taught His disciples to pray very differently! But He never taught them the “Star Trek” prayer. On the popular TV show of the 1970’s, Star Trek, whenever someone found him or herself in a troubling situation, he or she would communicate with the Starship Enterprise to “Beam me up Scotty!” Or in other words – “Get me out of this mess and back to safe territory.” Once we become a believer, God does not take us out of the mess of this world – He leaves us in it to help usher in His Kingdom.

I’m reminded of a story about President John F. Kennedy, when he first sat behind the presidential desk in the Oval Office. After completing the crazy busy election campaign, he sat quietly, then called his chief of staff and said, “What do I do now?!”

Jesus made it very clear to us what we are to do after becoming His followers: follow His example and serve others. We still have “work” to do here on earth. When Jesus ascended into heaven to return to God, His disciples were with him. They were staring into the sky when two angels appeared beside them and said, *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?”* (Acts 1:11). Their point? Get busy building for the Kingdom! Who does this apply to? Just some believers? To just those in “full-time” ministry? To only those with a little extra time on their hands? To those believers who are talented? It applies to **all** believers.

Unfortunately there exists a “Great Divide” in Protestantism between the people who do evangelism and those who do social justice according to Lydia Bean, a Ph. D. candidate in sociology, writing on the politics of evangelical identity.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

In a March, 2009, article in Sojourners magazine she said,

My parents are both Baptist ministers who preached a lot about the ‘kingdom of God.’ They didn’t mean just a spiritual reality – going to a disembodied heaven when you die – they meant building a more just society on earth. What would it look like to proclaim the gospel and invite people to follow Jesus in a way that leads to the work of justice? I’m constantly meeting other Christians who are trying to combine evangelism and justice as two expression of one gospel.

We believe evangelism and justice are two expressions of the one Kingdom of God. This is not a post-millennial theology. As stated in the Zondervan Handbook to the Bible,

There is also a ‘now, but not yet’ dimension to Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of God. Although God’s rule is powerfully present in His own words and actions, His parables paint word pictures of slow growth as the kingdom is gradually established, like yeast in dough or a small seed’s slow transformation into an impressive tree (Matthew 13:31-33). The final outcome, however, is inevitable. When Jesus comes again to wind up the history of the world as we know it, the kingdom of God will be displayed in total triumph.

So what does the Kingdom of God mean? We think it means just what it says...the Kingdom of God is wherever and whenever God is King...when He is in charge and things are done His way. His agenda, His plans, His desires. That place and space is the Kingdom of God. It’s when “there and later” becomes “here and now” in me, my small group, my place of worship, my city, my country, my world.

When we fully understand becoming the Kingdom of God on earth, we will start each new day saying, “I’m going on a mission trip today.”

In your own words, briefly describe the Kingdom of God on earth:

# Session 1

## HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER



### “Thy Will Be Done...”

In His model prayer Jesus also said, “*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...*”

What is God’s will (to be done here on earth as it is in heaven)? Again, this is a major biblical theme that we will only touch on lightly. We will focus more on God’s “will of command” (what he commands us to do) than God’s “sovereign will” (God is sovereign over all things and yet disapproves of many things that happen).

 ***Read & Reflect: Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37-39, Deuteronomy 5:7-21, Micah 6:8, Isaiah 58:6-11, Romans 12:1-2, Matthew 7:11-12, Matthew 25:35-40, Galatians 5:22-23***

What do you think “Thy will be done” means?

God’s will of command has been made clear in the Scriptures. He has revealed His direction for how we are to conduct our lives:

- ↑ Vertically, we are to love, worship, and serve Him;
- ↔ Horizontally, we are to love and serve others.

This is how we usher in the Kingdom of God to all people and especially to the poor, needy, and oppressed...the “least of these.” These things are certainly on God’s heart. God has always had a lot to say about the needy, and even though it is “popular” today in the early 21st century to talk about these topics, God said it first – we just haven’t listened to Him very well. As the author of The Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren, stated in an interview: “How can we have missed it?!”

When I was a child, our church provided envelopes in which to place our weekly offerings. The front of the envelope had a checklist of items that were measurements of spiritual maturity – things like: Read the Bible daily? Prayed daily? Brought a tithe? On time to Bible Study? And more. I don’t recall one of the measurements being something



# A CALL TO SERVICE

like “served someone” or “shared my faith.” As we say in service excellence training, “what gets measured is what gets done!” The Bible holds 2,100 mentions of poverty and justice – that’s a lot of airtime!

The MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service course will explore God’s will regarding “the least of these.” We find “least of these” people both inside the church (fellow believers) and outside the church (non-believers). For purposes of this course, we will call service inside the church – “ministry”; and outside the church “missions.”

Specifically, we will examine what God commanded believers to do in relationship to the needy and oppressed.

*If you were to ask most people on the street, “How would you describe how a Christian acts in word and deed?” what do you think you would hear them say? Try it, and write down their responses.*

# Session 1

## HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER



Unfortunately, seekers (non-believers) searching for spiritual answers, have been pushed away from the church. Please read the following quote and article, and write your reflections.

Unfortunately, and ironically, many individuals who are the most intense about their faith are the least tolerant. The intensity-intolerance link is a stumbling block to the unbelieving world that looks for the purity of religion and love to be combined... Christians are much more prone to the negative than the positive. It is easier to state what we hate than what we love. <sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Right Wing, Wrong Bird, Dr. Joel Hunter (2006).

### RESEARCHER SAYS HYPOCRISY NOT BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO EVANGELISM

By Bob Allen, Associated Baptist Press, July 23, 2009

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- People who don't attend church are not too bothered by what they view as hypocrisy in the church, but there are some things they don't like about Christians, says the head of the Southern Baptist Convention's publishing arm.

Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources, has been researching the "formerly unchurched" -- men and women who have been Christians for less than a year -- for nearly a decade. He says the results are surprising.

Contrary to popular belief, Rainer says, non-Christians by and large are not turned off by the church, preaching or Sunday school and are quite responsive to direct one-on-one evangelism.

But there are some things non-churchgoers don't like about Christians, Rainer says in a recent [blog](#):

- Christians who treat other Christians poorly. "The unchurched don't expect us Christians to be perfect, but they can't understand why we treat each other without dignity and respect."
- Holier-than-thou attitudes. "The unchurched know that Christians will make mistakes, and they often have a forgiving attitude when we mess up. But they are repulsed when Christians act in superior ways to them."
- Christians who talk more than they listen. "Many of the unchurched, at some point, have a perception that a Christian is a person who can offer

# A CALL TO SERVICE

a sympathetic and compassionate ear. Unfortunately, many of the unchurched thought Christians were too busy talking to listen to them."

- Christians who don't go to church. "The unchurched saw the disconnect between belief and practice in the lives of Christians who did not or who rarely attended church."

Rainer's original research was published in a 2008 book titled *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, but he has continued to follow those groups over the years.

Rainer says that contrary to the stereotype that hypocrisy is the main obstacle to evangelism, non-churchgoers are really not too bothered by some hypocrisy with Christians.

"They are well aware that any human will stumble at times," he says. "But these lost men and women want to know that Christians will treat each other well. They want to see humility in our lives. They want to know that we will take the time to listen, and even take more time to really be involved in their lives. And they want to know that we love our churches." <sup>(2)</sup>

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(2) The Baptist Standard, The Texas Baptist Newsjournal.

Is there a gap between how Christians should be seen by the world and how they are actually seen? If so, describe it.

In recent decades the church in America has struggled with engaging her members in the community, particularly the communities outside the church walls. This is not to say that great and heroic efforts aren't being made by the faith community to serve others – they are! But examining successful effort reveals that the “80/20” rule is strongly at work. The great majority of church members are not living lives of service to others.

A Gallop poll states that 90 percent of regular church attendees are not involved in service, and 50 percent of that number say they never will be! If church members were to

## Session 1

# HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER



move from just “saying the right things on Sunday” to also “doing what is right with their daily lives,” the impact would be staggeringly positive on many levels.

As a chaplain friend of ours said: “Sadly, Christianity has a not-so-good reputation for engaging constructively and positively in the public forum. In college, I wrote my thesis on Social Responsibility and the Christian Faith. I would write it very differently today.”

In the book of James, chapter 4 he warns us against the dangers of “friendship with the world.” When we take our cues from a self-oriented culture and adopt worldly values rather than Godly values – we are in trouble. Culture can be so subtle – you don’t even know that it has captured you until “Boom!” you’re ensnared.

For example: When our children were elementary-aged, we attended a church in downtown Orlando. Each week on the way to church, we would pass by another church that had a mission outreach to the homeless. There always were long lines of people waiting for a bed or meal. One week as we drove by, one of our children said, “Look at those bums.” Whoa! Where did that attitude come from I wondered!?

Our children had been taken along with us once a month to help feed the men in the Fresh Start ministry at the Christian Service Center; they had sung with their choirs often for the residents in local nursing homes; they had perfect attendance in Sunday School! But somehow this harsh attitude had crept into our child’s framework. It presented a perfect “teachable moment” for everyone in the car.

What do you think is largely responsible for this gap between what Christians should be doing for “the least of these” and what they are doing?

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## Fasting with our Lives

Saying one thing and doing another is not a new problem for the church. The prophet Isaiah had some things to say to God's people regarding this.

 **Read & Reflect: Isaiah 58**

In this passage Isaiah chastises the people of God who had been saying one thing but doing another. They were going through the motions of worshipping God – fasting from food, acting humbly – but, at the same time, they were abusing their workers, getting angry with one another and only thinking of themselves. After the scolding, Isaiah told them what it really means to worship the Lord, to practice real faith.

Paraphrased, verses 6-7 in Isaiah chapter 58 might sound something like this:

Stand up for justice. When you champion my kind of justice you please me, so treat workers with dignity and respect.

Show those at the bottom of the economic, social and racial ladder a way up. Remove the oppression of unbearable financial burdens. Find a way to remove those things that keep people down.

Share what you have, and more – when you champion my kind of mercy you please me. Don't let people go hungry, not on my watch. Don't let people go homeless, not on my watch. Don't let people freeze or wear rags, not on my watch. Don't ignore caring for your own family, they need you.

*Charlie Stuart*

What conclusions can be drawn from this? For the universal church? For you personally?

Session 1  
HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER



**Application** – as a result of this session I will do the following...

With my life...

In my community...

Through my church...

May God guide you as you  
“make your faith matter.”



## S e s s i o n 2

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# **GOD'S "PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM"**

Choices Have Consequences

By Barbara Stuart

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat...’ Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

*Matthew 25: 41-46*



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**COMPLETE PAGES 27-31 BEFORE READING THE TEXT THAT FOLLOWS**

Questions to ask your friends, co-workers and family members this week:

1. How well do you think the church is fulfilling the command to serve the "least of these?"

2. Do you think there are rewards in heaven for good works done on earth? If so, what are they?

3. Do you think people who do good works but are not followers of Christ will be accepted into heaven?

# A CALL TO SERVICE

 **Read & Reflect: II Corinthians 5:10**

What do these verses say to you about judgment and service to others?

 **Read & Reflect: I Corinthians 3:8, Revelation 22:12, Revelation 2:23**

Who is speaking in each? What conclusions do you draw from this?

 **Read & Reflect: I Corinthians 9:24-27, II Timothy 4:7-8, Revelation 2:10,  
I Thessalonians 2:19-21, I Peter 5:1-4**

The Bible speaks of five crowns - what are they, and why are they rewarded?

Who do you know that deserves these crowns? (1 person for each)



What are some acts of service you have done?

What motivates you to serve?

What benefits or rewards have you received for service?

Have you ever received praise for your service to others? Describe such a time, and how it made you feel.

 **Read & Reflect: Isaiah 58:8-9**

How does Isaiah describe God's reaction when we please Him by serving others?

# A CALL TO SERVICE

 *Read & Reflect: James 2:14-26*

Describe “dead faith” vs. “real faith”:

On the scale below, where would you place yourself?

Dead Faith

Real Faith

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

Has God ever asked you to do something very difficult? What was it? How did you respond?

Why do you think some people change their lifestyle so quickly when they become believers, and others, seemingly, not at all?



 *Read & Reflect: Matthew 25:1-46*

Who are the four characters in this parable? And who do they represent?

_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____

What are some possible meanings of this passage?

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## AS YOU READ THE FOLLOWING, REVISIT YOUR PRE-SESSION ANSWERS

If you ever have worked for a large company, you probably have been exposed to a “performance management system.” The basic elements of such a system are to make it very clear to employees what is expected of them, to monitor their performance as it relates to those expectations, and then to reward them for performance that aligns with the expectations or coach them to improve if their performance is below par. Employee’s choices have consequences...rewards for positive choices and retribution for negative choices. This is oversimplified – but you get the point.

As we discovered in Chapter One, God has made His expectations very clear: Follow Christ as Savior and serve others. He gives each of us the opportunity to accept or reject His “performance” expectations.

### Choices Have Consequences – Positive

“Reward programs” have been around for a couple decades: “use this credit card and earn bonus dollars, points, rebates, merchandise, travel and more.” Companies “reward” loyalty through the giving of prizes. Our “reward” for following Christ as Savior is the gift of eternal life in heaven. Isn’t this the greatest reward program you’ve ever heard of!?

But what about that other expectation: “serve others.” Bible scholars differ on their interpretations of “rewards for works.” Basically, some believe that there are **not** additional rewards or crowns (or trophies) in heaven but that all these things are elements of the reward of salvation – eternal life. Others believe that there **are** rewards for works done on earth that will be distributed in heaven.

What **is** very clear is that everyone will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We will have to give an account of every good and bad thing done while on earth. Paul, in II Corinthians 5:10, puts it this way: *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what He has done, whether good or bad.”* Here are a few other verses that speak to rewards related to works:



*...and each one will receive His own reward according to his own labor.*

*I Corinthians 3:8*

*And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work.*

*Revelation 22:12*

*...I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.*

*Revelation 2:23*

All my life I have overheard people say, "That will add jewels to your crown" when they observe someone doing an act of kindness or serving someone who is unlovely or a "least of these." They are referring to the concept of crowns being given to some believers in heaven, as reward for the life they lived on earth. We won't spend much time on this, but the Bible talks about five crowns that will be given in heaven for earthly work that is "above and beyond the call of duty" – or beyond what an "average" Christian might do or say. Here are some of the scriptural references for the "Crowns" concept:

#### The Crown of Incorruption

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

*I Corinthians 9:24-27*

This will be a crown that will last for eternity. It is intended for believers who are called to do things that require sacrifice – of time, lifestyle, etc.

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#### The Crown of Righteousness

# A CALL TO SERVICE

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

*2 Timothy 4:7-8*

This crown is reserved for those believers who live holy lives, not perfect – but they do the best “right living” they can, as often as they can.

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## The Crown of Life

*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

*Revelation 2:10*

Many call this the martyr’s crown – reserved for believers who undergo hardship, testing, trial and even physical death on Christ’s behalf. Some also believe this crown will be given to believers who serve in difficult jobs, like law enforcement or the military, who willingly risk their lives as a sacrifice for others.

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## The Crown of Rejoicing

*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.*

*1 Thessalonians 2:19-21*

This is often called the soul winner’s crown. Sharing the good news with non-believers is rewarded with this crown.

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The Crown of Glory

*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*

*I Peter 5:1-4*

Believers who help to shepherd the flock of God through teaching Bible Study, pastoring, and discipling will receive this crown.

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Most likely, someone came to mind as you read these descriptions. A dear friend of mine is what I consider an “angel here on earth.” She has a servant’s heart and is completely selfless. I could fill reams of paper describing the countless ways she has helped me over the 30 years we’ve known each other. She had a good teacher – every time I was with her sweet father, a minister of music, he would say, “Come and put your feet under my table and tell me how I can help you today.” I hope you are blessed by having someone like this in your life.

Beyond these five “reward” crowns, the Bible actually speaks of crowns quite often, probably because they were a symbol of royalty, power and honor that the people could understand. Revelation 4:10-11 says that our crowns will be cast down before Jesus at His heavenly throne as an act of praise – He is the ultimate King. Remember that Jesus wore a crown of thorns at His crucifixion – the guards were mocking His claim to be the King of the Jews (Matthew 27:29). And Revelation 19:11-19 tells us that Jesus will wear many crowns when He returns.

We encourage you to think for yourself regarding the question of rewards for works. I can think of no greater reward than the promise of hearing God say one day

# A CALL TO SERVICE

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Have you ever received praise from someone you greatly admire? Do you remember that feeling? I do.

While working for a large healthcare system, I was responsible for helping to create a culture of service excellence. I wrote an article about this and made the point that our motivation for excellent service was simply “it’s the right thing to do.” My pastor at the time, Dr. Jim Henry, a very busy man, took the time to write a note of encouragement on a copy of that article and send it to me. It meant the world to me. I still have it. Just imagine the feeling one day when the one giving the praise is the King of the Universe!

Heavenly rewards aside, I know from personal experience (and you probably do, too) that there are many earthly benefits to serving! Service keeps me humble and makes me appreciate more deeply all the blessings God has sent my way. It helps me keep a balanced perspective related to materialism and consumption...rather than a continual pursuit for more possessions and status, I am reminded to be grateful for what God has provided for me. Living in a country as affluent as the United States, if I never have one more “thing,” I will have experienced more material comfort than 99% of the people of the world. I know this is not a popular idea in a “bigger-is-better” culture.

This point was brought home to me a couple years ago when I was participating in a Bible Study. A missionary to Africa, home on furlough, was also taking the class. As we got to know one another – she confided in me that she could hardly wait to return to Africa, that she regarded it as her home. She said that the simple life they lived there allowed her to be closer to God, and that the material influences of living here were suffocating her. I was shocked at first to hear this! Then I realized that she was looking at our culture through “fresh eyes” – her insight was very revealing.

It has been my privilege to serve on the board for a local homeless shelter for the past couple years. Each evening, we serve a free hot meal to anyone – man, woman or child – who is hungry. Each night we shelter approximately 200 children and 400 adults. The face of homelessness has definitely changed in the past decade! Many of the

## Session 2

# GOD'S "PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM"



homeless today actually have jobs, but they either don't make a living wage or they have experienced extreme, unexpected expenses. Working as a volunteer at the shelter keeps me humble.

Perhaps this is what is meant in Jeremiah 29:7 – *“Seek the shalom (wholeness) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its shalom (wholeness) you will find your shalom (wholeness).”* In working for the shalom of society, we are also finding our own shalom.

And when we please God by serving others, He delights in sharing His pleasure with us. One of the great promises of God is found in Isaiah 58:8-9.

*Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call and the Lord will answer; you shall cry and He will say “Here I AM.”*

What is better than God having your back, or answering your calls for help, or lighting your path?

In short, service keeps us near to the heart of God.

## Choices Have Consequences – Negative

In Session 1, we also explored the “substitute kingdom of God” that many Christians believe today: “I’ve got my ticket to heaven, so it doesn’t matter how I live my life!” Nothing could be further from the truth. God speaks a great deal about real faith and dead faith.

James 2:14-26 says that even demons believe in God and fear Him, but that won't save them from His judgment. Real faith **works**. Then he mentions the faith-filled, genuine actions of Abraham and Rahab that made them acceptable to God. Verse 25 says: *“For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.”* In other words, if what we believe does not affect the way we live, the belief is dead. We must be careful that the gospel we preach is the gospel we practice.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

There are some passages in the Bible that have been labeled by scholars as “difficult.” Matthew 25:31-46, the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, is one of them.

Jesus was using a story that was familiar to his audience. In Bible times, each evening goats would huddle next to the woolly sheep to stay warm. In the morning, the shepherd would separate them. In ancient days, sheep were more valued than goats. In this parable, Jesus said He would separate the people one from another – the sheep from the goats – when He comes in His glory. The sheep will be rewarded by inheriting the kingdom that was prepared for them since the creation of the world. The goats will be sent into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

We have heard wildly different interpretations of this passage! One pastor explained it this way: “it doesn’t really matter what you believe about God or Jesus; as long as you are nice to and help people, you’re going to heaven.” The problem with this is that the rest of the Bible makes it clear that we are saved by grace alone.

Others have interpreted this to mean that believers who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoners will experience eternal damnation. And some have interpreted this passage to mean that believers who do not share the gospel will be turned away from heaven. (Do you see why this is called a “difficult” passage?)

There is another interpretation of this passage that I am more comfortable with: I don’t believe Jesus was talking about being kind and good to people in general. I think he was talking about how people treated **Him**. I believe the criteria Jesus will use for the separation is how we have responded to Him and how we have treated His people (believers). What do you think?

Now the really **big** question is: What criteria will Jesus use for the separating? How will He make these decisions? How will He determine who is a sheep and who is a goat?



Look at what He says in verses 34-36 and in 41-43:

*Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'*

*Matthew 25:34-36*

*Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'*

*Matthew 25:41-43*

Based upon the study of these passages, I want to say this as gently and as clearly as possible: If you are relying on your profession of faith in God to save you on judgment day, but you are living the same kind of selfish life as the people around you who don't believe in Him, **be very careful**. Do not trifle with sacred things.

Jesus said – “*you can tell what they are by what they do.*” (Matthew 7:16). Good works are not the reason we are saved, but they are the evidence that we have been saved. Someone once said, “If you were put on trial for being a follower of God, would there be enough evidence to convict you?”

Said another way – if Christ's grace is not enough to motivate you to be obedient and serve others, then you may need to seriously contemplate whether you really are a believer or not. As Rick Warren said in Purpose Driven Life, “If I have no love for others, no desire to serve others, I should question whether Christ is really in my life.” Think about it.

So, there are certainly wonderful rewards and benefits for obeying God through service to the “least of these.” And there are troubling verses about the consequences of



# A CALL TO SERVICE

not doing so. This really boils down to a question of motivation – what motivates you to do acts of service? The hope of rewards? Your love of God? Your fear of retribution?

For most of us (believers) **change is required!** I've often wondered why the salvation experience seems to transform some people so quickly and, in others, there is barely a perceptible difference in lifestyle. Something I read recently reminded me that **change takes time!**

One of my study Bibles belonged to my dear Aunt Lou. It's a Schofield Reference Red Letter Edition. I have never seen a Bible with more margin notes, slips of paper, and under linings! While reading in this Bible the book of Romans, I came across this in the footnotes for Chapter 1: "Salvation's the great inclusive word of the Gospel. Salvation is in three tenses: (1) The Christian **has been** saved from the guilt and **penalty** of sin; (2) The Christian **is being saved** from the **habit** and dominion of sin, and; (3) The Christian **will be saved** at the Lord's return, from all the **bodily infirmities** that are the result of sin and God's curse upon the sinful world." [Emphasis added.]

Isn't this a wonderful insight?! The second tense of this verb – "is being saved" tells us that all believers are in the process of being transformed. It takes time. It's been said, "Conversion is a moment that takes a lifetime."

Choices have consequences! Believers can choose to obey and serve...or not. Choose wisely.



**Application** – as a result of this session I will do the following...

With my life...

In my community...

Through my church...

May God guide you as you  
“make your faith matter.”



## S e s s i o n 3

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# **GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE**

Identifying the "Least of These"

By Barbara Stuart

'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

*Matthew 25: 35-36*



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



## Session 3

# GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE



**COMPLETE PAGES 45-47 BEFORE READING THE TEXT THAT FOLLOWS**

Questions to ask your friends, co-workers and family members this week:

1. When I say "least of these" - who do you think of?

2. What are your thoughts about the AIDS epidemic?

3. Do you think there are oppressed people in America? If so, who are they?

4. Describe a "least of these" person based on your current understanding.



# A CALL TO SERVICE

**Read & Reflect: Isaiah 10:1-2, Ezekiel 22:29, Psalms 82:3, Leviticus 19:14, Leviticus 19:32, Luke 10:25-37, Matthew 11:5, Matthew 25:35, James 1:27, Luke 14:13, Luke 4:16-21**

How did God/Jesus describe the “least of these?”

Who do you think “strangers” are in today’s American culture?

Who are the “oppressed” in today’s American society? Around the world?

 ***Read & Reflect: Deuteronomy 15:4-11, Exodus 23:11, Exodus 22:22, Deuteronomy 23:24-25, Deuteronomy 24:19, Ruth 2***

What did the Jewish law have to say about the treatment of the poor, widows and orphans?

Have you ever been a “least of these?” Describe the circumstances. Did someone minister to you? Who? What was your reaction?

Do you have a “least of these” in your life now? Describe

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## AS YOU READ THE FOLLOWING, REVISIT YOUR PRE-SESSION ANSWERS

During our first two sessions, we have explored the biblical injunction that imposes a social responsibility upon believers to show concern for the poor and the underprivileged (James 2:14-16; 1 John 3:17-18). It's time now to identify in detail **who** Jesus was referring to when He spoke of the "least of these" in the ancient world and who those people might be today.

First, to be perfectly clear – when Jesus used the words "least of these," He was **not** passing any type of judgment on the worth of these people. This would not align with all the other references Jesus makes in relationship to the full worth and value of every single person that He has created and known before the world was formed. In modern times, we talk a great deal about someone's "net worth" and have an unspoken, cultural ranking system – the higher someone's net worth, the more important they are. In God's economy, someone with little money, few skills, few talents, no physical attractiveness or abilities has the same "net worth" as someone who is greatly talented, physically beautiful and monetarily wealthy.

Now, with that point made, reflect for a moment...close your eyes and visualize someone who meets your definition of "least of these." What did you see? A long-bearded man wearing dirty, rumpled clothing, carrying a big, plastic trash bag, holding a sign saying: "Homeless. Will work for food."?

Perhaps as you are visualizing a "least of these" you see a very young mother trying desperately to manage her five children, all under the age of six? We all carry stereotypes of the "least of these" in our heads.

Both the Old and New Testament speak often and strongly to showing care and compassion to those in need. Isaiah 10:1-2 tells us that God is furious with those who make cruel and unfair laws that allow for the cheating of the poor and needy and robbing of widows and orphans. Ezekiel 22:29 talks about the people of Israel cheating, robbing and abusing the poor; and taking advantage of foreigners. Psalms 82:3 says: "*Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy.*" One of the virtues of the "good

## Session 3

# GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE



wife” in Proverbs was that she *“reached forth her hand to the needy and poor”* from the abundance of her well-run household. (Proverbs 31:20).

Special laws protected the blind and the deaf: *“You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind.”* (Leviticus 19:14). Leviticus 19:32 speaks of honoring the aged: *“You shall rise before the gray-headed and honor the presence of an old man.”* The classic story of the “stranger” is found in Luke 10:25-37 – commonly known as the parable of the Good Samaritan. (We will examine this more closely later in this text). Matthew 11:5 tells us that Jesus, in His tenderness toward the distress of others, went beyond the requirements of the Law. (The disciples, speaking to John the Baptist about Jesus):

*The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

Matthew 25:35 talks about the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, and imprisoned:

*For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.*

James 1:27b talks about the orphans and widows:

*Pure religion...is this...to visit orphans and widows in their trouble.*

Jesus taught in Luke 14:13 that those whose hospitality embraced *“the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind”* were blessed.

Also in Luke, Jesus is recorded as saying, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised.”* (Luke 4:18-19).

So from these accounts (and there are many more), we can conclude that God is very interested in justice and compassion toward (at least) the following populations:

# A CALL TO SERVICE

**Widows, Orphans, Poor, Needy, Strangers, Sick, Oppressed, Brokenhearted;** these are God's target audience for the receiving of care and compassion.

It is interesting to note that the Israelites had many laws related to the care and provision for the poor, widows and orphans (Deuteronomy 15: 7-8, Exodus 23:11, Deuteronomy 15:1, Exodus 22:22). Even with these laws in place – Jesus still distinguished them – the “least of these” – for special attention.

- ❖ One of the legal rights of the poor, widow, the orphan or any hungry person was that of harvesting grain or grapes from his neighbor's fields-enough to satisfy his/her immediate hunger – but they were not allowed to take any away with them. (Deuteronomy 23:24-25).
- ❖ At harvest time the reapers left some grain for the “stranger, fatherless, the widow” (Deuteronomy 24:19) as Boaz directed his workers to do for Ruth in chapter two of the book bearing her name. They did this by rounding out the corners of all their fields, leaving the grains in the corners for the less fortunate. (During a trip to Israel in 2000, I saw this practice first hand).

May I share a “Boaz” story with you? My father has been blessed with the gift of success in business. As a member of the “greatest generation,” you might say he was a self-made man – although he would be quick to tell you that his success has been a partnership between himself, my mother and God.

As with most success stories – Dad's story began with struggle. He was born to a farming family in the 1920's in South Dakota. The 1920s and 30s were not good to many farmers – the “dust bowl days” were tough. In 1932, when he was eight-years-old, the bank foreclosed on the family farm. He recalls that the full impact of foreclosure did not hit him until the day the trucks came and hauled away their 25 milk cows. It was a very sad day.

Fast forward to 1984. He had become a successful dairyman and was buying a herd of 70 Jersey cows from the widow of a dairyman. The men had loaded the cows onto two

## Session 3

# GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE



semi-trucks, and six Jersey calves were left. The widow and her daughter and grandson sadly watched. Dad noticed this and was reminded of the day the trucks took the cattle away from his father's farm. He looked at the little boy and asked him if he would like to have the calves. Sixteen years later, that "little boy" was running his own farm.

I had never heard that story until I read it in a book published in 2001 about farming families in America! With tears in my eyes, I wrote in the margin: **"This is a Boaz story!"**

### **Today's Least of These**

In today's society, who are the "least of these?" Starting with what the Bible called them, we have updated the definitions to reflect America's current reality.

**Widows** – Certainly this applies to married women who have lost their husbands to death. In a larger context, could this category of "widows" apply also to other women who have lost – either permanently or temporarily – the support of a husband? For example, could it apply to women of divorce? Or single moms? Or spouses of those in military service while their spouse is deployed?

According to the U.S. Census released in 2007, there are approximately 13.6 million single parents in the U.S., rearing 21.2 million children – approximately 26 percent of the children under 21 in the U.S. today. The majority – 84 percent - of custodial parents are mothers. Their needs are enormous. Most of them must work. A dear friend, Diane Strack, started a ministry for single moms a few years ago that involves one-to-one mentoring. It has been my privilege to work with her in this ministry. We see transformation in these women's lives literally in less than 24 hours! (Learn more about it at [www.NewStart4Moms.org](http://www.NewStart4Moms.org)).

**Orphans** – Jesus cares so deeply for the children...truly they are "precious in His sight." They are the innocent ones. Children don't get to choose if they will be born into poverty or sickness; they don't get to choose if their parents will neglect or abuse them; they don't get to choose if they will receive basic healthcare or not; they don't get to

# A CALL TO SERVICE

choose to be born. In today's world, there are many orphans in foreign countries and many valiant efforts are being made to promote Christian adoptions.

In our own country, there are many "special needs" children who need adoption. And many children who have been adopted have special needs dealing with feelings of abandonment. Some children are "orphaned" by parents who are separated and starting new families. Some are "orphaned" by parents who must work such long hours that they do not have time to give their children.

**Poor** – When the Johnson Administration declared war on poverty in 1964, it chose an absolute measure as the metric, "The Poverty Threshold." This is the threshold "below which families or individuals are considered to be lacking the resources to meet the basic needs for healthy living; having insufficient income to provide the food, shelter, and clothing needed to preserve health." While there is some controversy over this threshold (is it under- or over-stated?) it has been adopted as the standard. The 2008-2009 Health & Human Services Poverty Guidelines are: for one person, an income of less than \$10,830; for a family of four, an income of less than \$22,050.

The U.S. Census in 2007 showed that nearly six percent of people in married families lived in poverty, 27 percent of people in single parent households lived in poverty and 19.1 percent of people living alone lived in poverty. A study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine in 2006 stated that extreme poverty in America increased between 2000 and 2004 and that this population was overrepresented by children, African-Americans, and Hispanics. "Extreme" poverty is defined as people with incomes that are one-half of the poverty threshold.

Read an excerpt from that study to see how extreme poverty affects us all.

A rise in poverty rate is important because of the enormous difficulties faced by the poor in meeting the most basic human needs (e.g. food security, clothing, housing, health) and in obtaining the means to escape their conditions (e.g. education, jobs, higher earnings,). The suffering alone is sufficient cause for concern among those who advocate social justice, but rising poverty rates are also relevant to those who reject a moral duty to help the poor. The global competitiveness of the US economy suffers if workers are too poor to obtain an education and modern job

## Session 3

# GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE



skills, the government loses tax revenue and spends more on public assistance because of poverty, and communities fall victim to urban decay, crime and unrest.

Can you imagine the existence for those who do not know where their next meal is coming from, or where they will lay their head tonight? On (rare) occasion, I skip lunch. By the time 4pm rolls around, I can be heard saying, "I am *starving!*" Of late, I've really tried to stop saying that – because my hunger is nothing compared to the truly hungry. Here's an idea: quietly fast once a week (health permitting) in order to become viscerally aware of what it feels like to be truly hungry. Then give the money you would've spent on food for that day to a local food bank or your church's benevolence fund.

Perhaps the rise in extreme poverty in America is what prompted the making of the popular TV show, Extreme Makeovers. This tear-jerking show is reminiscent of the "Queen for a Day" TV show from my childhood when women would compete to win a washing machine! There would be floods of tears as their stories were revealed. For me, these shows walk a fine line between advancing awareness of poverty in America and exploitation of the needy for entertainment sake. What do you think?

Oftentimes when I talk about the poor among us – I hear fellow believers say this: But Jesus said "the poor will always be with us." (Mark 14:7). What do you think Jesus meant by this? That we are to ignore the plight of the poor because we can never eradicate poverty? I don't think so. He knew full well that God provides more than enough abundance for everyone through His creation. I think He was trying to remind us that the poor are here because we have failed to keep God's commands. (Read Deuteronomy 15:4-11 for more on this).

To tolerate poverty by excusing it with "...the poor will always be with us" verse is perhaps one of the worst "out of context" interpretations a person can make.

**Needy** – I have known people who are cash rich, but poor in spirit. Think of the desperation in the lives of addicts, compulsive gamblers, alcoholics, those recovering from trauma, or suffering from low self esteem. Think of the people so driven by "success" that they don't get enough sleep, ruin their relationships with their family, and lose their

# A CALL TO SERVICE

health. And I believe there are some who are soul starved. They fill their bodies with food but their souls are starving for God; for spiritual food.

Other groups of “needy” people in today’s society could include senior adults, especially shut-ins. One-third of all seniors today live alone. And one-tenth of them live in poverty. The U.S. Census Bureau tells us that the number of people in America 65 years of age and older will more than double between now and 2030. The population of elders will grow from 12 percent today to 20 percent in 2030. It is no secret what kind of demands this will put on our country (Medicare, Social Security) and our families.

Those in prison or just being released definitely “fit” the description of “needy.” Jesus spoke of “visiting the prisoner.” Showing the love of God, without judgmentalism, to those in prison may be the breakthrough they need to lead a lawful life when released.

**Strangers** – Let’s review the parable of the Good Samaritan to discern who “strangers” in today’s world might be. In this parable there are several characters: The traveling man – a Jew; the robbers; the Jewish priest; the Jewish temple worker (the Levite) and the Samaritan man who had compassion on the wounded traveler. Although they worshiped the same God and followed the same first five books of the Old Testament, the Jews and the Samaritans hated each other. This disdain sprang from historical and racial considerations. The Samaritans of the Northern Kingdom of Israel had intermarried with the conquering aliens – the Assyrians – after the fall of Samaria in 721-1 BC. Sadly, since the beginning of time, (Cain/Abel) clans have clashed.

In the parable, the Samaritan went the second mile to care for the Jew, even when fellow Jewish leaders, who should have, did not. The parallel today would be like a Palestinian caring for an Israeli (or vice versa). The point Jesus was making is we are to care for those who are in pain or suffering – no matter who they are – even the “strangers” (people we despise) among us. But Christians are not supposed to despise anyone! As Dr. Phil would say – “get real.” Be honest with yourself – are there any groups of people that you have a hard time loving?

In reality, anyone who is different from us is a stranger.

## Session 3

# GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE



I believe there are at least three classifications of “strangers” among believers in America today (and you can certainly choose to agree or disagree!). They are Muslims, homosexuals, and undocumented immigrants. Why do I choose these three? Because I have heard them greatly maligned and misunderstood by fellow believers. These types of feelings are usually driven by fear.

Muslims – I am writing this in 2009. It has been eight years since 9/11. We had just taken our middle child to college when the terrible attacks by extremists on our country occurred. All I wanted to do was scoop up our son from California and our daughter from North Carolina and hold them close. You can probably remember exactly where you were, what you were doing, and who you were with when you heard the news.

I’m not sure I have ever felt as shaken in my life as I did that day. No one knew if it was the beginning of a series of attacks or even the end of the world. Words entered my lexicon that had not been there before: terrorist, al Qaida, suicide bombers.

I was working in a large hospital at the time; our chaplains held prayer services to help our employees remain calm. We cautioned them against painting all Muslims with the broad brush of being “evil.” Many of our employees and patients were Muslims. As hard as I fought my fears, I’m embarrassed to say that when I had to travel by air the following month, I was hyper-aware of anyone who looked “Middle Eastern.” Please Lord, forgive me. Those panicky, fearful initial feelings have passed for me thank goodness.

I am troubled though by the derogatory remarks I still hear from fellow believers about Muslims. One that broke my heart sounded like this: “We should just kill them all.” Emboldened by the Holy Spirit, I have been able to gently “speak the truth in love” to some of the people making these remarks. I remind them that not all Muslims are evil, just like not all Christians are evil. And that if we make fun of their customs or religious holidays, we are inviting them to do the same to ours. Hmmm. I usually get a very loud silence in response. But at least it gives them something to think about...I hope.

Homosexuals – The culture wars of the last couple decades have put the spotlight on this population. What, I wonder, elevated this to be the “issue de jour” above say,

# A CALL TO SERVICE

divorce, gluttony, pornography, etc.? I really don't know. Some have said that it was politically driven – that homosexuality as an issue is more provocative and therefore galvanizes people to action easier. Does this mean we don't care about other important issues? The National Association of Evangelicals had this to say in a publication titled: *"For the Health of Nations: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility"*:

The Bible makes it clear that God cares a great deal about the well-being of marriage, the family, the sanctity of human life, justice for the poor, care for creation, peace, freedom, and racial justice. While individual persons and organizations are at times called by God to concentrate on one or two issues, faithful evangelical civic engagement must champion a biblically balanced agenda.

Although there is much debate, most Christians today consider homosexuality a wrongful lifestyle.

I once asked a Bible teacher (who definitely enjoyed the buffet table!) these two questions: "Do you think you can be a Christian and a homosexual?" And, ""Do you think you can be a Christian and obese?" Think about it. Sadly, I believe the church's approach toward homosexuality has been more like modern day Pharisees rather than the loving model Christ showed us. I was moved by an interview with Billy Graham that I read recently. He was asked, "What would you do if you discovered your son was gay?" With choked emotion he replied, "I would love him all the more." Oh, that we could all have that level of compassion! Many churches have started a ministry to families who are dealing with homosexuality – I just hope that we will become the kind of universal church that homosexuals would feel comfortable visiting.

Undocumented Immigrants – Yes, we need better border controls. Yes, we need current undocumented aliens to become "legal." Yes, we need them to pay their fair share of taxes. But HOW we do this is important. Our approach is not only testimony to our faith, but also to our American values. For example – the wrong way would be to do what I heard espoused during a Bible Study one day: "We should build a 10-foot wall and machine gun anyone who comes over." Yikes! Perhaps a more balanced approach would be something like strengthening border controls, while at the same time, giving incentives

## Session 3

# GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE



to employers to help non-criminal aliens become citizens over a period of a couple years. What do you think?

Have you, like the priest and the Levite, ever passed by a “stranger in need?” Junior High School can be a real challenging time with children caught between the innocence of childhood and the maturity of adulthood. Frankly, they can be just plain mean to each other during these years.

Such was the case for a schoolmate of mine. She had severe learning disabilities, walked and talked funny, wore coke-bottle-thick glasses and basically was an “outcast.” Everyone mocked her; when students would see her approaching in the hallway, they would throw themselves up against the wall, trying to separate from her as though she had leprosy, and make some cruel comments about her. How she persevered, I do not know. Because I was “moderately” kind to her – she would seek me out often. I am not proud of the way I treated her either – I let peer pressure win the day. This memory scars me even to this day (I can see it in my mind’s eye).

**The Sick** – During my working career, I conducted seminars about service excellence. A great deal of my work was with hospitals. I always asked class participants to begin with a clear picture in their minds’ eye of the “worried soul” (patient) in the bed...they are being pummeled, poked, and prodded, awakened in the middle of the night; they have their clothes taken away from them (and sometimes their teeth!) and they don’t have a clue what is happening to them or who they will see next; they are completely out of control and scared. Once the caregivers have that vision in mind, they can administer emotional and spiritual healing as well as physical healing. The modern technologies and advancements of today often make us forget that “good medicine” is much the same as it was hundreds of years ago – it starts with compassion.

Some have said that AIDS is the leprosy of the modern era. Some terribly misguided folks have even cruelly called it “God’s pest control.” You probably have heard unsympathetic remarks made about people with AIDS...like, “they brought it upon themselves.” Did they “volunteer” for the disease because of a promiscuous lifestyle or are

# A CALL TO SERVICE

they truly “victims?” My friends, this epidemic around the world is horrific and it just doesn’t matter how the person got sick. They are sick. And they need help. And compassion. Rick Warren’s wife, Kay, is using her platform to advance the cause of AIDS eradication, even while she is battling cancer. What a glorious example!

Lynne Hybels, co-founder of Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois, is also working to eradicate AIDS. In an article from *Sojourners* magazine in April, 2007, she stressed the importance of believers working together with all different kinds of people to tackle this problem. She said, “We need to pay more attention to the things we agree on. We all agree that people need medicine, orphans need to be taken care of, and hungry people need to be fed. This is a crisis – we don’t have time to waste on a lot of talking.”

Mental illness is another category of “the sick” that is vastly misunderstood, under-treated and under-funded in our country today. People suffering with mental illness need friends! Others who I believe should be included in this category of “the sick” are those who are disabled; either through birth defect, accident or war.

**Oppressed** – This is not a word we hear too often in America anymore, although in our short history as a country, some of our countrymen have experienced oppression. For example, women did not gain the right to vote until 1920, less than one hundred years ago! A more daunting oppression in America was slavery. Read this excerpt from Peter Gomes, author of [The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind](#).

In the summer of 1995, one hundred and thirty-two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, one hundred and thirty years after the end of the Civil War, and twenty-seven years after the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., at their annual meeting, the Southern Baptist Convention, America’s largest Protestant denomination, apologized for the role it had played in the justification of slavery and in the maintenance of a culture of racism in the US. The Baptist did more than apologize. They took on the more morally rigorous and theologically appropriate term of “repentance” to describe their action in adopting a resolution on the floor of the convention. For many this was a radical step, for while no one was prepared to embrace the historic arguments either for slavery or for racial segregation, there was no general enthusiasm to appear to repudiate either the faith or the conduct of their cultural ancestors.

## Session 3

# GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE



What about oppression around the world? Sex-trafficking, child slavery, unfair labor practices, abuses of human rights and discrimination plague our world. And as a Christian, we should be concerned.

But, who is oppressed in America today? Some could make the case that continuing discrimination against women, some people of faith, and people of color, constitutes oppression. We believe that one “oppression” that cuts across all these categories is “economic oppression.” Even in America, where the concept of the “American Dream” is alive and well, it is very difficult to rise up out of poverty if born in to it.

Why? In part because of the systematic nature of poverty, and also because of the rabid individualistic work ethic that is so much a part of capitalism.

The story of Dr. Donna Beegle, as recorded in the Muskegon Chronicle, April 24, 2009, illustrates this.

She was born into poverty, the daughter of white migrant workers who labored in the fields and orchards of America, following the crops because there were no other dreams to pursue.

“Nobody talked about working hard and ‘making it,’” she says. “Everybody I knew worked hard, really hard, but we still didn’t have enough money to pay the rent and the bills and buy food. That’s the life we knew.”

By the time Donna Beegle was 14, she’d dropped out of ninth grade. She was married at 15, a mother at 17, divorced and on welfare by the time she was 25 – and when she looked around her, all she saw was more of the same.

In 1986, Beegle and her two small children were living in a roach-infested motel in Portland, Oregon, after being evicted from their apartment. She worked, but she couldn’t provide for her kids on her salary.

Her story picks up in 1986 when applying for assistance from her local Community Action Against Poverty program, Beegle met a caseworker who said she was eligible to take part in a pilot program for women in just her circumstances. At first, Beegle “flat out” rejected the idea until she learned that being in the program made her eligible not only for education, but also for federal housing.

“A roof over my babies’ head,” she says in retrospect. “Do you know how much energy it takes to worry about where you’re going to sleep each night? Where you’re going to lay your head?”

# A CALL TO SERVICE

The first thing she had to do was “unravel the shame of poverty.” The memories are never far, even though she entered what she calls “the middle class world” 20 years ago. She was born into poverty, one of many generations of America’s poor, and she had to learn to dream of a better life.

And, of course, the “ultimate” oppressed would include babies who are aborted and other innocents who die senselessly from preventable disease and hunger.

**Brokenhearted** – Have you ever been truly brokenhearted? So distraught that your bones ached, you could not eat, sleep, or even pray? Most people will experience this at least once in their life. We have. (Read our story at the end of this session). Those in deep grief, rejection, abandonment, suffering a loss of a job, a relationship, a child, a dream, those who suffer domestic abuse, etc., are surely among the “least of these.” Psalms 34 has always been a favorite of mine: *“The Lord is close to those whose heart is breaking.”* One day God revealed to me that no matter what I experience in this life, Jesus has experienced it too. He knows the pain. And He is present to comfort.

## You Decide

Decide for yourself who you think are the “modern-day least-of-these” based upon what God speaks to you through His Word. “Least of these” are found “outside” the walls of the church **and** they are found on the inside, too! In Session 5, you will be given a chance to discover which of these “least of these” people groups you may be drawn to for service and support. Be praying that God would reveal this to you.

## What About You?

When asked to describe the change in how evangelicals are responding to social justice issues, Lynne Hybels, in that same Sojourners article from April, 2007, said, “In the second half of the 20th Century, a lot of churches were asking, ‘Can we figure out a way to communicate the verbal message of the gospel to the world?’ In the 21st Century, the question is: ‘Can we live out this gospel compassionately in the world?’”

Have **you** ever been a “least of these?” The period of 1989 to 1991 was terribly difficult in the life of our family. To make a long story short, we lost our 50-year-old family

## Session 3

# GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE



business, experienced severe financial reversal, a life-threatening, unplanned pregnancy, and the death of a newborn child. We had extravagant medical bills and no health insurance. We were brokenhearted. Life was a mess.

These dark days were lightened by loving people who came forward, offering to pay or even forgive our medical bills, to provide outings for our three children, to bring us delicious food every night for months, and send notes and make visits of encouragement to nourish our souls. Our friends, faith and family saw us through this difficult time.

And now our “mess” has in many ways become our “message” as we have been able to help others going through similar situations (see II Corinthians, chapter one). Having been a “least of these,” if only for a short period, has made us keenly aware as believers of our responsibility to others.

Do you currently have a “least of these” in your life? Someone you are ministering to? For many years we cared for a single, elderly aunt who was able to live on her own, but suffered severe, chronic anxiety. She needed help with practically everything – shopping, driving to the doctor, paying her bills, some cooking, medication management, etc. Along with other family members, we did it because it was the right thing to do. But it was not easy! Ministering to a “least of these” is hardly ever convenient. Besides the fact that we were rearing three teenagers at the time, her illness made her at times ungrateful and downright spiteful! Time and again I would remind myself – I was doing this as though she were Jesus Himself. And that made it a lot easier.

Hebrews 13:16 tells us, *“And do not neglect doing well and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”* If you do not have a “least of these” in your life – We encourage you to find and keep one! The blessing will be yours. Proverbs 11:25 says *“the generous man becomes rich, by watering others – he waters himself.”*



# A CALL TO SERVICE

**Application** – as a result of this session I will do the following...

With my life...

In my community...

Through my church...

May God guide you as you  
“make your faith matter.”

## S e s s i o n 4

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# THE MASTER EXAMPLE

How We Are to Serve

By Barbara Stuart

Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

*James 2: 15-17*



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



Session 4  
THE MASTER EXAMPLE



**COMPLETE PAGES 65-70 BEFORE READING THE TEXT THAT FOLLOWS**

Questions to ask your friends, co-workers and family members this week:

1. What are your attitudes about service?

2. Do you think there are “undeserving” poor? Why?

3. Do you think the Bible endorses any particular economic system?

# A CALL TO SERVICE

 *Read & Reflect: 1 Corinthians 13*

How are we to serve?

What does the Greek word “Agape” mean?

Have you ever served an “unlovely” person? What motivated you?

How did you feel?

Do you think there are “deserving poor” and “undeserving poor?” Explain.

# THE MASTER EXAMPLE



Have you ever had the opportunity to share your faith while serving someone? If so, describe.

 **Read & Reflect: John 13: 34-35**

How will the world know we are Christians?

Have you ever had the opportunity to share your faith while serving someone? If so, describe.

What are some “important” last words you have said to someone? (Think about leaving your friends after college, or saying something to your child before they marry, etc.)

# A CALL TO SERVICE

 *Read & Reflect: John 13 and Matthew 26*

What is happening in these two passages? When is it happening? (Hint - find the answer in John.)

What was the significance of Jesus' actions (foot washing)?

What was Jesus teaching them?

Do you find it easy or difficult to be humble? Explain. Can you think of someone who models this well?

## Session 4

# THE MASTER EXAMPLE



 *Read & Reflect: John 13: 17*

What must we do to be blessed?

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about the life you are living regarding time and balance, with 1 being "I have plenty of margin time to move through life with ease," and 10 being "I am completely overwhelmed!"

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Do you practice spontaneous service? Explain.

Are you involved in any organized service to the "least of these?" Describe.

How much time do you think believers should give in service to the "least of these" each week?

# A CALL TO SERVICE

Think about your financial life - on a scale of 1 to 10, how generous are you? With 1 being "I spend everything I make and more on myself and my family," and 10 being "I tithe, give special offerings at times, and have some 'margin money' to meet specific needs of others." (This is private and careful thought should be taken before sharing with others.)

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

 **Read & Reflect: Mark 12: 42-44**

What are some Biblical guidelines for giving?

 **Read & Reflect: II Corinthians 9: 12**

What two good things happen when you give?

 **Read & Reflect: Luke 12: 15**

What does this say to you about standards of living and quality of life?

## Session 4

# THE MASTER EXAMPLE



### AS YOU READ THE FOLLOWING, REVISIT YOUR PRE-SESSION ANSWERS

By this point in the course, some of you may be feeling burdened – you want to accept the responsibility for being the kingdom of God on earth by practicing a service gospel as well as a personal gospel. But – you are stuck in your lifestyle and aren't sure if you can make the necessary changes. I hope this session will allay some of your anxieties! God wants us to live a balanced life of work, rest, play, worship and service. And, after self-examination, you may need to make some changes. However, we are not proposing that everyone go into full-time paid ministry! What we are proposing for your consideration is proportional stewardship of your time, talents and treasures.

### Serving Lovingly

The book of First Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul around 56 A.D. in response to a letter from Chloe, a member of the early Christian church in Corinth. She had told Paul that their church was struggling with the Christian life in the midst of their very pagan environment that was consumed with the pursuit of profit and pleasure. One of the problems they were combating was the selfish use of spiritual gifts. In the thirteenth chapter, Paul counseled them that they were to exercise their gifts **with love**.

This is perhaps the best definition of “love” ever penned! It moves beyond the concept of love being only an emotion, to reveal that true love is primarily an action. Fortunately, the language of the original New Testament has four “L-words” to express various aspects of love. The Greek word *agape* is the word for love used in I Corinthians 13, meaning the love that God commands, the love that is God-like. In other words, even if someone does not appeal to us, we can treat her right, show her respect, accept her, and in so doing encourage her in the faith if she's a believer or tell her about faith if she's a seeker.

In John 3:16, Jesus says: “*For God so loved the world...*” The verb that is used for “loved” in this verse is also *agape*. Even while we were sinners, God decided to love us, because it is His nature to love.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

So – what does I Corinthians 13, commonly called the “Love Chapter,” say to us today?

Certainly it says that our motivation for service must be agape love. Jesus did not discriminate between the “deserving poor” and the undeserving. Some have said that they have a hard time ministering to those who “brought their trials upon themselves.” They give examples of people with AIDS, lung cancer (when they were heavy smokers), alcoholics and drug addicts, or unwed pregnant women.

On most Sundays, I serve as a “decision counselor” at the close of our worship service. I meet with people who need prayer, who want to know more about following Christ, or how to become a member of our church. One Sunday, I was visiting with a middle-aged woman who could not speak for several minutes due to her weeping. When she regained her composure, she told me that she was already a follower of Christ, but had taken a series of “little left turns” and was now living with the man who was the father of her child, although they were not married. She wanted to become a member of our church but thought she would not be eligible. She was obviously under great conviction. I reminded her of God’s love and His desire for her to live a holy life. She agreed to take the next right step toward holiness.

Jesus met all these types of people in the “marketplace,” ministered to them and encouraged them to “go and sin no more.” If you have a hard time ministering to the “undeserving poor,” remind yourself of the guilty stains of sin in your own life and the gratitude you have for God’s forgiveness. How can any of us be judgmental at the foot of the cross?

We are currently ministering to a young man who we will call Frank. From time to time, Frank calls us, asking for food because he has lost another job due to misconduct. He suffers from some terrible losses in his life and they have affected his self esteem. Even though we have given him guidance, he seems to be caught in a cycle of self-imposed suffering through poor choices. What are we to do? Cut him off? I don’t think so. We will continue to be the “leaven, salt and light” in this young man’s life whether he

## Session 4

# THE MASTER EXAMPLE



“deserves” it or not; whether he “gets it all together or not.” This is not to say that we will enable him by oversupplying him with food and goods – but we will see that he does not go hungry. Whether he changes or doesn’t change is not our responsibility. We will continue to tell him that God loves him and does not desire for him to live like this.

I believe this (the sharing of our faith) is the second application we can draw from this passage. While you are serving others, in agape love, you will be observed! Why? Because servant hood behavior is “not of this world.” When people notice your acts of service, they will ask you, with a tone of incredulousness in their voice, “Why are you doing this?” **Be ready to give a good answer!**

I missed a really good opportunity for sharing my faith early in my career. We had been in a meeting that was difficult – there was strong disagreement and some harsh words were directed toward me. Even though my face was burning, I tried to respond with grace rather than escalate the disagreement.

Later that day, a co-worker dropped by my cubicle to see if I was okay. He commented on the discourse of the meeting and asked me how I had kept from getting angry and blowing up in retort. Flattered by this compliment, I just said thank you and gave some weak answer like “I’ve always been taught to be kind.” **I missed the God opportunity!** Think of what could have happened if I had said something like, “Well – to tell you the truth, I wanted to respond with anger. But, I am a follower of Christ, and because of His love for everyone, I try to stay calm and speak the truth as I see it, respectfully.”

I believe every act of service is an opportunity to share our faith – we must simply keep our eyes and ears open, looking and listening for the natural curiosity in those we serve. (See the Appendix for a simple way to share your faith story).

Jesus says in John 13:34-35, *“I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, If you have love for one another.”* Serving the “unlovely” with genuine love is one way we show the world that we belong to Jesus.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## Serving Humbly

The words we speak and the actions we take when we know the end of something is near are always laden with significance. Think of the words you say to your children as they leave home for college, before they marry, or to a loved one as they are leaving this earth. When our children were at home, we would call out to them as they left the house: “Remember whose you are!” as an encouragement to be good representatives of not only our family but of their heavenly Father as well. Last words are important. So it was with the words Jesus spoke to his disciples at the Last Supper, recorded in John 13, and Matthew 26.

The book of John makes it very clear that the Last Supper was held the evening **before** the typical Passover Feast. The disciples were probably wondering why they were celebrating the traditional Passover Feast a day early. (This would be like celebrating Thanksgiving on a Wednesday rather than the traditional Thursday.)

They would find out why the next day when Jesus, the ultimate sacrificial lamb, shed His blood on the actual day of Passover. The Old Testament tradition met the New Testament promise in a miraculous way!

Two significant events happened during this supper – first, Jesus instituted the ordinance of the “Lord’s Supper” using the symbolism of the bread and the wine, and secondly, he washed His disciples’ feet.

Imagine the setting – Jesus and His disciples had been dining and were probably quite relaxed. The custom for dining in Bible days was to recline on sofas or pillows around a table, resting on an arm or elbow (not the picture da Vinci paints for us in his famous fresco). They even had some quarrels about which of them would be the greatest in God’s Kingdom.

Can’t you just see Jesus, who no doubt was consumed with thoughts about the events of the next 24 hours, quietly shaking His head in dismay? The destiny of humankind lay in His hands and those closest to Him were arguing over status and position! Supper was not finished yet, but He seized the “teachable moment.” For Him,



service was more important than supper. Quietly, He got up, took off His outer robe, and wrapped Himself, servant style, in a towel. Then He poured some water into a basin and began to wash their feet. Shocked silence fell upon the room. This was very awkward for them. I doubt that Jesus had ever done this before.

To understand the significance of His actions, it's helpful to know a little about the custom of foot washing in Bible days. Because of the dusty roads, it was typical for people to leave their shoes or sandals by the entrance of a home. The house servant would then wash their feet. This was considered the lowliest act of servitude. Do you see the extreme contrast? The most High was doing the most low. The Master of the Universe was performing the most humble of all human acts. His "position" did not matter to Him.

What was He teaching? Particularly on the heels of the argument over who was to be the greatest, Jesus was saying with His actions, **"serve one another, voluntarily, with sincere humility."**

Is there any task too menial for us? Beneath us? Humble service often involves sacrifice. Some people help as long as it's convenient. Some serve expecting some reaction of gratitude in return. Sadly, I have been one of "those people" at times. We have filled the gas tank of women in distress, given overnight housing to a mother and her newborn baby (who slept in a cleaned-out drawer), put people on buses traveling home who promised they would reimburse us, and never did, and more. I don't know if I was being naïve or just proud, but I was always a little disappointed when those we helped were not more appreciative.

Returning to the Upper Room, Peter's role in this story is fascinating to me. He sees Jesus working His way around the room to him. He is quite uncomfortable with what is going on. He contradicts himself when he says, *"Lord, you will never wash my feet – ever!"* How could he proclaim Jesus as "Lord," and in the same breath, disobey his Lord's will? Perhaps it's because in our human condition, we just don't always "get" what

# A CALL TO SERVICE

God is up to. His ways are not our ways. This is why we need to be attuned at all times to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus explained His actions to Peter, the ever exuberant Peter then asked for a full bath rather than just a foot washing! I can hear Jesus chuckling over this. Jesus explained to Peter (verse 10) that he did not need a full bath but only to have his feet cleaned. This “teaching” is filled with a deeper meaning: those who are believers do not risk the loss of their salvation when they sin (they have already been “cleaned”). But, they do occasionally need a **little** (feet only) cleaning up from wrong living. (This supports the concept of the three tenses of the word “saved” that we discussed in Session 2).

When Jesus had finished, He put on His robe and taught some more. As He so often did, Jesus used “experiential learning” in the Upper Room – experience something – then draw the meaning from the experience. As recorded in John 13:12-17, Jesus told them to serve each other as He had served them. Does this apply to only believers serving believers? I don’t think so – because that would not align with the rest of Jesus’ teachings on service. Don’t miss the nugget of truth at the end of this passage. Verse 17 says, “*If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.*” In other words, we will not receive blessing just by *knowing* these things; we are blessed if we **do them**. Once again, it is Jesus’ call to action – the service gospel. These were some of his very last instructions to His disciples and therefore they are very important to us today.

In setting this example of humble service, I don’t believe Jesus was instituting foot washing as a part of worship. Nothing is wrong with doing this of course, but the main point is not to be missed: if the Master of the Universe is willing to take on a servant’s role, then we, who are far less, should certainly have an attitude of humble, sincere and voluntary service to each other.

## Session 4

# THE MASTER EXAMPLE



One of the best illustrations of humility is found in Robert Coles' book A Radical Devotion, where he tells about an encounter with Dorothy Day, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement:

It was on (an) afternoon, almost thirty-five years ago, that I first met Dorothy Day. She was sitting at a table, talking with a woman who was, I quickly realized, quite drunk, yet determined to carry on a conversation. The woman...had a large purple-red birthmark along the right side of her forehead. She kept touching it as she uttered one exclamatory remark after another, none of which seemed to get the slightest rise from the person sitting opposite her.

I found myself increasingly confused by what seemed to be an interminable, essentially absurd exchange taking place between the two middle-aged women. When would it end – the alcoholic ranting and the silent nodding, occasionally interrupted by a brief question, which only served, maddeningly, to wind up the already over-talkative one rather than wind her down? Finally, silence fell upon the room.

Dorothy Day asked the woman if she would mind an interruption. She got up and came over to me. She said, "Are you waiting to talk with one of us?"

ONE OF US: with those three words she had cut through layers of self-importance, a lifetime of bourgeois privilege, and scraped the hard bone of pride: "Vanities of vanities; all is vanity." With those three words, so quietly and politely spoken, she had indirectly told me what the Catholic Worker Movement is all about and what she herself was like.

## **Serving in Big and Small Ways**

We live in an era of busy-ness and over-commitment. It could even be said that we worship the idol of busy-ness . . . whoever has the busiest calendar wins the accolades! A friend told me of a recent survey taken at her church which revealed that people feel overburdened by life. It's sort of like the classic I Love Lucy episode where Lucy is working a conveyor line in a candy factory! Life just seems to speed up and we feel overwhelmed. All the modern conveniences of technology...text, tweet, email, blogs, voicemail, cell phones...that promise time saving seem to only compound the problem. And now, we are encouraging you to add service to your already crowded calendar!?! Relax.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

I believe we are called to serve in both big ways and in small simple ways as our lives allow. Big ways would include structured, organized efforts to serve the least of these in your place of worship or community. And small ways would include spontaneous acts of service along life's journey. We will talk about each . . . "Big Ways" in Session 5, and "Small Ways" here.

## Small Ways

In Matthew 6: 4, a part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says:

*But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."*

I think that this verse isn't so much about hiding the good works we do from others, but rather that our good works should be so much a part of who we are through discipline and grace that our "good works muscle memory" engages and we do the right thing without conscious thought.

Very much like a piano player using both hands skillfully after years of practice no longer needs to concentrate on what either hand is doing. Or, as I'm typing these words, my fingers are "automatically" doing what they have been trained to do. So it is with our good works – let them be so "second nature," that we do them without thinking.

You may be thinking that small acts don't really matter when contrasted to the world's great need, so why bother. Truly, what we have and bring to the table does not seem like it is nearly enough to meet all the needs we see around us. But it is not the adequacy of our supplies or our skills that finally makes the difference: it is the power of Jesus working in the smallest and least to transform this world into the "kingdom of God here on earth." This transformation is God's economy where twice (as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew) we see a very few fishes and loaves miraculously feeding thousands of hungry people with multitudes of baskets of food left over! Never underestimate the power of one small act. We are in the sowing business; God is in the reaping business.

## Session 4

# THE MASTER EXAMPLE



This story, from The Word for You Today, June 20, 2009, illustrates that we are in the sowing business and the rest is up to God.

One night a man walking to church saw four boys hanging out on a street corner, so he invited them to go with him. They did, and they went back again the following Sunday. Actually, these four boys became the nucleus of the Sunday school class he began to teach. Years later his friends decided to contact the four boys, see what had happened to them and invite each to write a special birthday letter to be read at a surprise party for their old teacher. Their letters are real eye openers.

One boy had become a missionary to China, one was president of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank, one was the private secretary to President Herbert Hoover, and the fourth was – President Herbert Hoover himself.

Sometime your small encounters are God-encounters that take place when you're busy with other things or on your way to somewhere else. If you're not prepared you'll miss a real blessing, and a chance to grow and an opportunity to put God's interest ahead of your own.

Jesus left the comfort of heaven to walk the road of human need. You'll notice He didn't set up a throne in each town and say 'This is My place, if you want to see Me come here.' No, He went to the marketplace. The Bible says that Jesus and His disciples 'Went through the towns, preaching the gospel.' So the moment your compassion is activated, stop. What seems like a small encounter may be a God-encounter, and produce results you never dreamed possible.

As we used to say in service excellence seminars, service is most often **not** an "add-on extra" – but something we do as we routinely go about our jobs. When you put on your "service antenna" and begin each day attuned to opportunities you will be amazed how many are placed in your pathway. This takes practice! Author Michael Harrington spent two months at an Indian Reservation when he was fourteen-years-old. In his book, The New American Poverty (1984), he says, "I did not see what I saw." According to Harrington, "impaired vision" plagues many, if not most, people.

My husband, Charlie, seems to have been born with a very sensitive set of "service antenna." One day while hurrying through an airport to catch our plane, I noticed that he suddenly was not by my side. I turned around, and saw him about 20 feet behind me, helping a woman traveling with four small children, one in a wheel chair. I have to admit,

# A CALL TO SERVICE

I felt a little perturbed until I walked back and took in the scene more fully. The youngster in the wheelchair had vomited and the mom was trying to clean up him and the floor, while at the same time holding on to her other children in the middle of a bustling airport. So I pitched in and held the children, while Charlie grabbed a nearby trash can and got custodial help, then helped the mom with the cleaning. My eyes filled with tears. Maybe it was the completely helpless look on that sick child's face or the sheer fact of Charlie's compassion. I don't know. But I know I will never forget it.

Here's another example of practical, spontaneous service: the other day I had to have some lab work done. Expecting a long wait, I took along my new hobby – knitting. While sitting there, I had at least seven “moments of truth” – opportunities to choose whether I would “serve” or not. Simple things like holding the door for a lady using a walker, picking up a dropped piece of paper for a man in a wheelchair, sharing a conversation with the lady sitting next to me about knitting, listening to the office manager as she told me about her children, making the grouchy phlebotomist smile, etc.

These simple things – offering a smile, a pleasant “hello,” an encouraging word, listening, showing interest in someone's life, letting someone cut in front of you in traffic, moving your neighbor's newspaper from the curb to their door while they are away, being relational, freezing and sharing extra portions of dinner with an elderly neighbor – all of these are acts of service. The words of an old hymn might say it best:

Out in the highways and byways of life, many are weary and sad. Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife, making the sorrowing glad. Make me a blessing, make me a blessing. Out of my life, may Jesus shine. Make me a blessing, oh Savior I pray. Make me a blessing to someone today.

Granted, if I start my day with only my agenda in mind, with no “margin time” allotted for these spontaneous service opportunities, service will never be convenient! Everyone can do something – whether it's five minutes or five hours. Yes, you may need to review your commitments and make some margin time. But don't feel compelled to do it overnight...remember, change takes time. How often are we to serve? It depends. I believe we are to be good stewards of the time God gives us...but not to be legalistic. If

## Session 4

# THE MASTER EXAMPLE



you have great family demands at home, like raising a troubled teen or a disabled child, that **is** your service.

If you are “retired” from paid work, you probably have more time to serve others. My mother, who has been blessed with good health and economic stability, was able to serve each of her four sisters as they aged. She is now the last of her seven siblings. Each of them had some type of sickness; two were widowed. Mother literally ushered them from this world to the next. She visited them each day once they lived in assisted care facilities; she clothed them, managed their financial affairs, decorated their living spaces, drove them to doctors’ appointments, held celebrations for their birthdays, and managed their health insurance and medicines. She had the gift of time since her children were grown, and she chose *“not to hide from relatives who needed her help”* (Isaiah 58:7). What a blessing she was to them! Regardless of your life stage, you can serve spontaneously every day. Remember the words of Mother Teresa: “It is not the magnitude of our actions but the amount of love that is put into them that matters.”

### **Generously**

How are we to serve? Generously. Liberally. Sacrificially. While this concept applies to time, talents and treasures, I want to address “treasures” specifically.

Talking about money makes most people squeamish. Nearly half of Jesus’ parables involved teaching about money; He knew it was a big issue for us. The beautiful story in Mark 12:42-44, commonly called the Widow’s Mite, speaks to the fact that Jesus expects believers to give proportionally to their ability AND also sacrificially.

I was reared on the verse *“To those who much is given, much is required.”* (Luke 12:48). I imagine my mother learned this at home, growing up. My maternal grandfather was a coal miner in Kentucky in the early 1900’s. He had a large family to feed so in addition to coal-mining, he kept a garden and a few hogs. His family lived very modestly on the outskirts of town in the coal-mining community. As my mother says, “we were poor, but we didn’t know it.”

# A CALL TO SERVICE

Each year at “hog-killing time,” Papa would slaughter three hogs – two for his family and one to share with the other families in the camp. Mother says he never could refuse a stranger and would always invite them to share supper, even when food was scarce. He gave proportionally and sacrificially.

Recently, I’ve become involved with a ministry called **Nine12**. Founder Candice Blomeley organized the ministry on the principle expressed by Apostle Paul in II Corinthians 9:12: *“So, two good things happen as a result of your gifts – those in need are helped, and they overflow with thanks to God.”* The ministry helps those who are in debt learn how to be wise spenders so they can become generous givers. (Read more about it at [www.NINE12.org](http://www.NINE12.org).) The concept of “margin” is addressed in this ministry: If you spend everything you have on yourself – there is nothing left to share when a need presents itself...and you and the needy person miss the blessing. How do you get financial “margin?” The Nine12 ministry teaches that change is usually required and that a change of habit begins with a change of heart. It generally includes learning to live more simply, below your means. It requires re-setting your priorities, “putting the big rocks in first.” This is the first step for many toward living a generous life.

## Living Simply or Simply Living

Last summer I had the privilege to visit a dear friend who lives on Lopez Island in the Pacific Northwest. It was a delightful respite from the hot, “dog days” of August in Florida. My friend had made a commitment to living more simply a few years ago when she designed and built her own home. It was interesting to live in her environment for a couple weeks. For example, her bedroom closet, only 30 inches wide, is in stark contrast to the huge walk-in closets most homes have today.

She has no washer/dryer, no dishwasher. She does not use any paper products in the kitchen – no paper towels, paper plates or napkins. She recycles everything! We drank water poured from covered pitchers, not from plastic bottles. She does not have a TV set, and only watches videos. She gets the “news” through her computer when she

## Session 4

# THE MASTER EXAMPLE



visits the library (she does not have internet service in her home). She rides her bike to most places, even though she owns a small car. On her refrigerator is a little sign: “Live simply so others may simply live.” Nice. She told me the story of how she moved in to her new home.

She took all her possessions out of storage and placed them under tarps she had set up in her side yard. One item at a time was carried inside. If it “fit,” she kept it; if it did not, she carried it back outside and eventually to the community “dump,” which is actually a wonderful garage sale (with lots of free stuff) open twice a week. She seems very happy to have less than at other times in her life. Her possessions do not possess her. Jesus said in Luke 12:15, “*Life is not measured in the abundance of our personal possessions.*” In other words, you can have a lower standard of living and yet have a high quality of life.

If you continually compare yourself financially to others, the ‘ol “keeping up with the Jones” routine, you will never have financial margin or contentment. It has been said that comparison kills contentment. Being content with what God has provided for you, living within your means, being generous, and always striving to improve is the better way.

Here’s a simple idea to help you in your desire to be generous. Imagine this. You’re stopped at a traffic light. You see a person holding a “homeless” sign. Your heart is moved. But you don’t want to give cash, knowing that there is a chance that the person will not use it for food. (A California friend told me that in San Diego – the homeless hold signs that say: I’ll be honest; I need a beer!)” What do you do? Maybe buy a book of food coupons from a nearby fast food restaurant and carry it in your car. Add a message to each coupon – something about God’s love and directions to the nearest food shelter. Give the coupons away as the Spirit leads you. The City of Orlando has a wonderful palm-size card to “pass along to someone in need.” It contains information about the 24/7 support phone line, shelters, meals, and counseling.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## Socialism vs. Capitalism

Got your attention didn't it?!? There seems to be a growing debate today with regards to the economic system in America, perhaps because we are in the midst of the worst recession since the 1930's. Many people are financially scared for the first time. Some believe we are trending toward socialism and away from capitalism. Many have looked to the Bible for defense of one or the other economic systems. It seems that the divisive issue seems to be that of "redistribution of wealth from the wealthy to the poor," and since taking care of the poor is a main topic of the MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service course, we will touch lightly on this debate. (If you want to have some fun, Google "The Bible and Socialism.")

The Bible has a lot to say that could be interpreted as socialistic – making everyone the same economically. For example: Acts 4:32: *"Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common."* Also consider the words Jesus spoke to the "Rich Young Ruler" (Mark 10:17-27). *"Go and sell what you have and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven."* The Bible also has a lot to say about systems that could be interpreted as capitalistic – such as owning property, owning businesses, paying employees fairly, etc.

In some parts of the Bible, wealth and riches seem to be signs of God's approval and blessing (Deuteronomy 8:18 and Psalms 112:1, 3). In other parts of the Bible, prosperity is considered to be wicked. (Psalms 52:1, 5-7; Psalms 37:16).

We believe that the Bible, taken as a whole, as it should be taken particularly on difficult topics, does not endorse either socialism or capitalism. I think the unspoken question that most people are asking in this debate is "From a biblical standpoint, what is the obligation of the state (government) to provide individuals for the good of all? How much?" It's the eternal struggle between self interest and communal interest. We believe the Bible is silent on this in letter, but in spirit – we think it endorses making sure that

## Session 4

# THE MASTER EXAMPLE



basic needs of all people are met (remember the 2,100 verses about poverty and justice we mentioned early on!?).

We do believe the Bible endorses **proportional stewardship, the paying of civic taxes and philanthropy.** Stewardship means the wise use of one's resources. Being a **steward** implies that a person's money does not really belong to him, but is held in trust for God and for the good of others. Riches themselves are not a problem. But the effect they have is often destructive on those who have them or who seek after them.

My moral argument asserts that the community is obligated to provide basic levels of sustenance, health care, and education for its members. That obligation is based on the preciousness of every human being and on the belief that God's plan desires the flourishing of every person. It assumes the obligation of all to contribute to the community but puts a special burden on the rich.

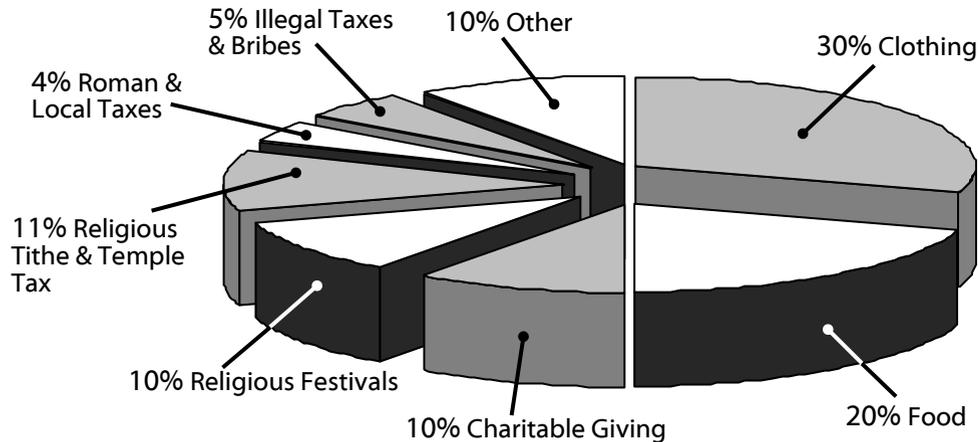
And in the Christian tradition, the obligation to care for the neighbor in need is not contingent on the worthiness or behavior of the neighbor. That is the crux, I believe, of the Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the Good Samaritan, which are central to the gospels and to the church's general insistence on compassion and care for the poor.<sup>(1)</sup>

The pie chart on the following page illustrates the typical expenses for a person in Biblical days (source: [Zondervan Handbook to the Bible](#)). Note the different type and amounts of taxes they paid.

Just because we "render unto Caesar" **taxes** does not mean that we are a socialistic economy. The "Caesars" in America are elected by the people (they serve at the consent of the governed); they are not dictators or kings. We get to decide where our tax dollars are spent through the electoral process. Certainly a portion of our tax money should be to help the "least of these," as should a portion of our church and personal budgets. Do you know how much of your church budget goes to serve the "least of these?"

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## Expenses for a working-class family in New Testament Palestine



- (1) From *Lifting Up the Poor: A Dialogue on Religion, Poverty & Welfare Reform*, published in 2006 by Mary Jo Bane, a former Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Professor of Public Policy and Management at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

**Philanthropy.** As Peter Gomes says in *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*, “Wealth is not what you have; wealth is what you have been given that enables you to give to others.”

Recently, we had some nice potted plants stolen right off our front porch! It definitely perturbed me and also reminded me of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6:19-21: “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*” We lay up treasures in heaven by being generous philanthropists here on earth.

## Session 4

# THE MASTER EXAMPLE



### The Master Example

How we are to serve is reflected in Jesus' life: voluntarily, sacrificially, in the marketplace along life's journey, lovingly, humbly, generously, and in community with others.

**Application** – as a result of this session I will do the following...

With my life...

In my community...

Through my church...

May God guide you as you  
“make your faith matter.”



## S e s s i o n 5

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# FINDING YOUR SERVICE SWEET SPOT

Matching Passion with Opportunity

By Chris Fouché

Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

*Matthew 17: 20*



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.





**COMPLETE PAGES 91-95 BEFORE READING THE TEXT THAT FOLLOWS**

Questions to ask your friends, co-workers and family members this week:

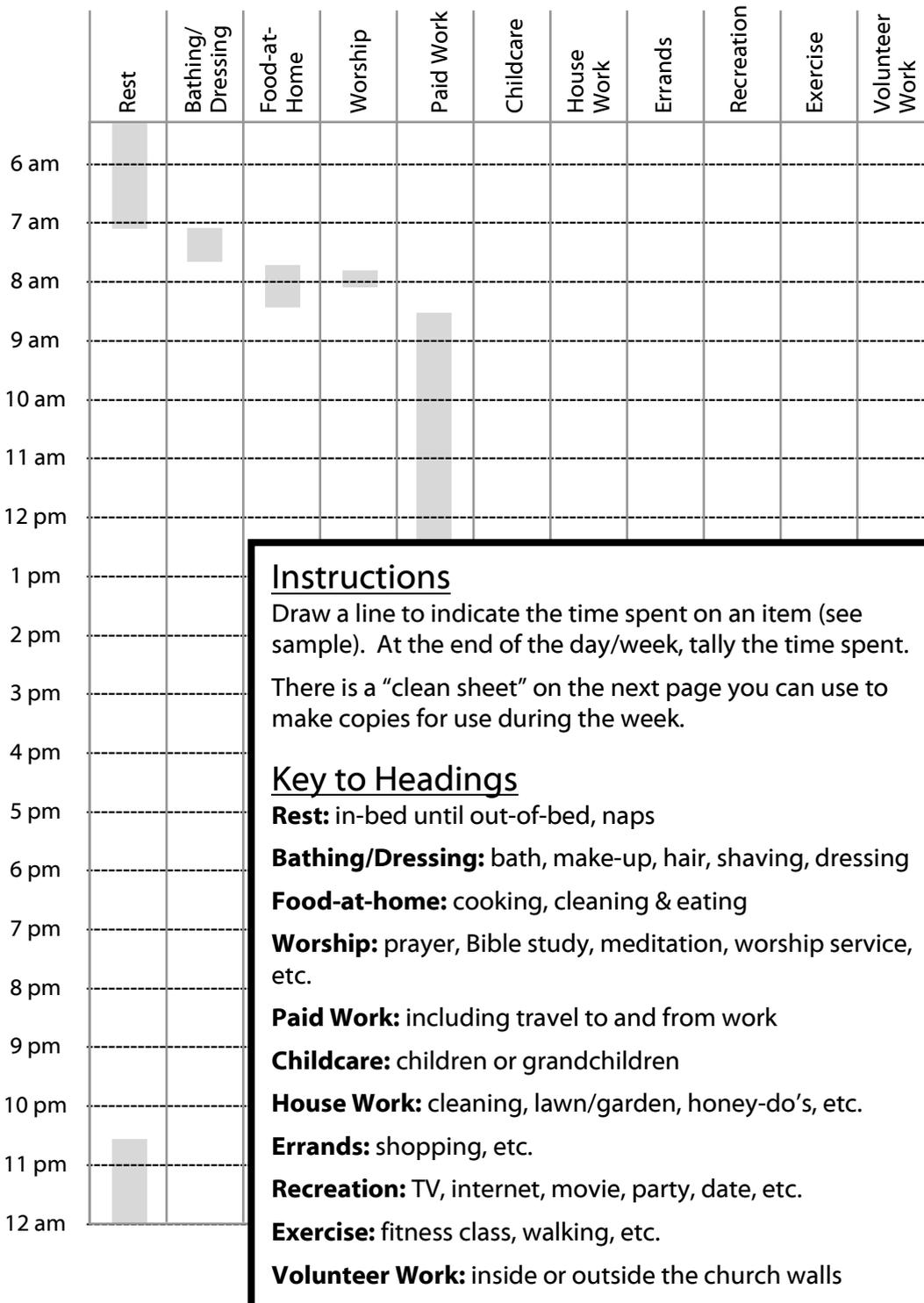
1. Have you ever felt a desire to serve but met a barrier? What was it?

2. Why do you think Americans are so busy?

3. Have you ever tracked how you spend your time for a week? If you did - what do you think you would discover?

This week, as a part of your homework, you are being asked to keep a time log for one week. Make copies of the form. This will help you as you make decisions about what to “stop” and what to “start.” Be completely honest with yourself – no one else will see this.

# A CALL TO SERVICE



# Session 5

## FINDING YOUR SERVICE SWEET SPOT



	Rest	Bathing/ Dressing	Food-at- Home	Worship	Paid Work	Childcare	House Work	Errands	Recreation	Exercise	Volunteer Work
6 am											
7 am											
8 am											
9 am											
10 am											
11 am											
12 pm											
1 pm											
2 pm											
3 pm											
4 pm											
5 pm											
6 pm											
7 pm											
8 pm											
9 pm											
10 pm											
11 pm											
12 am											

# A CALL TO SERVICE

Respond to this statement: "We were made to live a timeless life, not a temporal one." What does this mean to you?

 **Read & Reflect: Ecclesiastes 2: 10-11, I Timothy 6: 17-19**

Which passage relates to the timeless life and which relates to the temporal life?

 **Read & Reflect: Matthew 13: 44**

What does this parable have to say regarding sacrifices for the Kingdom of God?

What would it take for you to be willing to sacrifice like that for the Kingdom of God, for the people that God cares most deeply about? (This is not an easy question is it?!)

 *Read & Reflect: Jeremiah 1: 5, Ephesians 2: 10*

Respond to this statement: “God has gifted and shaped each one of us in different ways, to be utterly strategic and unique in the way that we serve Him.” Do you agree? Disagree? What are the implications of this for you?

If you were asked in a job interview to name some of your gifts/talents/abilities - things you are just naturally good at doing - what would you say? (Don't be humble on this question - God gave these abilities to you!).

If you were asked to name life experiences that have helped to “shape” you - what are some things you would mention? (For example: being an adoptive parent, corporate executive, traveled abroad, special needs child, financial reversals etc.) Note: these will not be shared in class.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## AS YOU READ THE FOLLOWING, REVISIT YOUR PRE-SESSION ANSWERS

At this point in the study, you've looked at the biblical mandate for serving others, and the fact that we never look more like Jesus than when we are serving. You've thought deeply about whom we are called to serve, and what those people may look like (or smell like, for that matter!). Finally, you've meditated on how we are to serve, the mindsets and attitudes that need to be there if the service is truly Godly. So, with all of that in mind, here is my question...

*Are you feeling overwhelmed yet?*

If you're anything like me, then at some point along the way, you have had a thought similar to this one float through your mind: "I know I should be serving. I know it's what Jesus is calling me to do. And I know that I will be blessed if I do. But have you seen my schedule lately? I'm just too busy to add anything else right now! I'm barely keeping my head above water as it is!"

If this sounds like you, take comfort in the fact that you are not alone. In fact, if there is anything that unites us today as Americans, it is busyness! Why are we so busy? What types of activities are filling our schedules? Are we consumed with producing things that will last, or are we occupied by the things that will fade away? Take a look at your daily schedule. What did you find? Hours spent watching TV? Dreaming about the newest iPhone? Or maybe your day was filled with the pursuit of money, power, privilege, etc? If any of these are true of you, then please hear this message: **you were made for something more than the life you're living now.** I don't say that lightly, and I don't say that to shame you.

On the contrary, I want to encourage you, because God has given us the opportunity to live lives that matter, lives that last beyond our years here on earth. We were made to live a timeless life, not a temporal one. Temporal lives are spent in the pursuit of things that are temporary. These things are enjoyable and can bring great pleasure at the time. But it is truly remarkable how quickly they vanish in our hands, no matter how desperately we try to hang on.



You don't believe me? Let me ask you some questions: Who won the Super Bowl last year? Ok, who won it 5 years ago? 10 years ago? Or who won the Grammy for best album last year? 5 years ago? 10 years? At the time, these football players and these musicians were at the absolute apex in their chosen professions, and they were feted with honor and praise. Now we can't even remember who they were! The honor and glory that the world has to offer most definitely comes with an expiration date.

By contrast, the Bible calls us to live a timeless life. What does that mean? I think it means that we spend our days here on earth doing the things that leave a lasting impact. God tends to disregard what the world values as important, and honor what the world disregards as unimportant.

The author of Ecclesiastes found this out the hard way. In Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 he says,

*I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.*

You might say that he was striving after treasures that were earthly, huh? No matter what the "prevailing wisdom" around us has to say, pleasure and achievement cannot sustain us for very long. Jesus understood this very well. In His Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in Matthew 6:19-21, He commented on the nature of real treasures when He said,

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

# A CALL TO SERVICE

Finally, Paul, in his instructions to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:17-19), had this to say on the matter:

*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

So what's the point? So many people spend so much of their time chasing things that are temporal – power, money, pleasure, etc. Many other people fritter away hours watching television or surfing the Internet. And that's not to say that any of these are bad things; in moderation, they are gifts from the Lord. Money and fame can in fact be valuable tools for serving the Lord, if they are used on behalf of those who don't have them!

However, if we took an honest look at the motivations that most people have for pursuing money and influence, most of the time they would fall into the category of temporal motivations – a higher standard of living for myself, more toys, etc. These things will fade away. But the Bible calls us to pursue the things that are timeless – things that will last beyond this life and into the next. The message is unambiguous. This is the way that followers of Christ ought to live.

If we claim to know the Lord, we need to be pouring ourselves out for others, particularly those who do not possess the resources that we do.

As it says in Isaiah 58:10-12,

*...if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.*



Isn't that who you want to be?

So, if we have the vision of the life that God is calling us to live, but standing between us and that vision is an overcrowded schedule, filled with the pursuit of things that may be good but aren't on God's agenda, then I think the first step is to take a good long look at our schedule, and make some tough choices. Keep a log if you've never done so, and track your daily activities.

It may seem like a small thing, changing your daily itinerary, but our daily schedules reveal our priorities, don't they? You are going to put your time into things that you value. It's that simple.

So many Christians only pay lip service to God. Can an outsider study our lives, the way that we spend our time, and come to the conclusion that we care deeply about the Kingdom of God?

Let me state the question another way: Do we really care about the things that God cares about? Do we care about the people that God cares about? **Are we willing to sacrifice for those people?** In order to free up the time to do what God is calling us to do, we may have to cut some things from our daily schedule. We may have to rearrange our priorities so that our lives are about what God is about. We may even have to sacrifice some things that we enjoy.

In Matthew 13:44, Jesus tells a parable comparing the "kingdom of heaven" to a treasure hidden in a field. The man in the parable, upon finding the treasure, sells everything that he has to get it. Nothing else on earth is as important to him as that treasure. Are we willing to sacrifice like that for the Kingdom of God, for the people that God cares most deeply about? It's not an easy question, is it?

I think that the key to unlocking this idea is to rethink and expand our idea of what stewardship is. I know we have visited this topic before, but when most people talk about stewardship, what are they referring to? It's almost always finances, right? But in reality, the idea of stewardship ought to have a say in every aspect of our lives. Everything has been created by God, and for His purposes (Colossians 1:16). That includes

# A CALL TO SERVICE

us – our time, our psychological makeup, our gifts, our talents, our families, our possessions, our future, our dreams – none of these things are truly ours. They belong to the God that created us, and they are to be used for His glory.

Dr. Donald S. Whitney, professor of biblical spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, makes a striking comment when he says, “If we are going to be like Jesus, we must see the use of our time as a Spiritual Discipline.” Are we willing to be disciplined with our time, and to maximize it for God’s glory?

So does that mean that we forsake everything that sounds remotely fun, sell our televisions, give up all activities that we’re passionate about, and head on down to the church nursery? Hardly! Part of being a good steward is to realize that we weren’t all created in a mold. God has gifted and shaped each one of us in different ways, to be utterly strategic and unique in the way that we serve Him. As He told Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:5: *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”*

The Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 2:10 says something similar: *“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* In both of these verses, the message is that God has prepared us specifically to accomplish a purpose for His Kingdom. Implicit in that message is this stunning reality: **no one on earth can serve the Kingdom in the exact way that we can.** There is a need in the Kingdom of God that we were designed to fill.

What does that mean to you? At the very least, it ought to convince you that you are not meant to be shoehorned into a specific role, in order to fulfill a need that a church has. That’s not to say that you wouldn’t do it if the need arises, but chances are, if you stay in that role long-term, you’re probably going to burn out. Who voluntarily stays in a position that they dread?

Rather, the secret is to examine ourselves, to examine the way that God has shaped us, and to discover how our makeup is aligned with a way to serve the Kingdom of God. That is a much more exciting way to “do ministry”, isn’t it?



There are three basic categories, three frames of reference that will help you to discover your “divine design” in the words of Dr. Jimmy Knott, Teaching Pastor at First Baptist Church in Orlando, Florida, that will help you hone in on that area of structured, organized service that you will truly enjoy and thrive in.

The first category to assess is your **passions**. Your passions are the issues or the people groups that “bump your needle,” so to speak. They might keep you up at night, or make your heart beat faster, or break your heart, or all of the above!

Whatever they do to you, here are two things that you have to know about your passions: (1) they will determine how you will serve the Lord more so than any other factor. Your passions will serve as a magnet- drawing you to issues and people and intersect with them. There’s no use fighting it, and there’s no need to, because (2) your passions were given to you by God. To quote Jimmy Knott again, “It (your passion) is that piece of God’s heart He has given to you to care about for Him.” So if you can determine where your passions overlap with the passions of God, you will have gone a long way in determining the way in which you will best serve His kingdom.

So how do we determine what God’s passions are? The primary way is through the pages of Scripture. It is God’s Word to His people, and it reveals what matters to Him. So what do the Scriptures show us? As we have seen in earlier sessions, God is passionate for the poor, the sick, the oppressed, and the marginalized.

Jesus said that those around us will know that we are Christians by our love, and the only love that can be seen is the love that manifests itself in action. That action is serving others.

This is a mission statement coming from the mouth of Jesus Himself, and it exclusively talks about the poor, the prisoners, the blind, the oppressed – basically the marginalized and the excluded. Our mission is to be “little Christs” as C.S. Lewis once said, so isn’t it only natural that we are called to serve those people, too?

To sum up, if there is an issue, or a group of people that you just burn for, that you are passionate about, and you can find Scriptural evidence that God burns for it, too, then

# A CALL TO SERVICE

you have just found a huge clue in identifying how God has created you to serve His Kingdom.

The second clue that is helpful in this search is identifying your **gifts, talents, and abilities**. Simply put, what are you good at? There are some things, some tasks, that we were designed to do. It almost feels effortless for us to do these things; if someone asked about them we would probably say “it just comes naturally.”

Doesn't it make sense that you would be more inclined to serve in a way that plays to your strengths, and not to your weaknesses. This is the danger that any service organization has to deal with when they start with the mindset of “these are the holes we need to fill,” rather than “these are the gifts that our people are bringing to the table.” You may be doing a very good thing by filling a hole and meeting a need, but you're not maximizing what you are capable of doing.

One reason we struggle with this is that we were taught that “we could do anything if we tried hard enough.” Even in areas that are weaknesses, we have been taught that we can overcome those weaknesses with sheer force of will. That's a lie. There are activities that, no matter how hard we try, we will never be good at. I can practice playing baseball 50 hours a week for the next 5 years, and I will still never be good enough to pitch in the major leagues. Or I could volunteer in the church nursery every Sunday for the rest of my life, and I would still never get to the point where I was truly good with 2 year olds. I might get competent at it, might get more comfortable around 2 year olds, but I would never have that natural ability that other people have to soothe and to take care of 2 year olds.

There is a disturbing byproduct of this “I can do anything if I try hard enough” mindset: the vast majority of us have a much easier time spotting our deficiencies than we do our strengths! Think about your high school report cards when you were a kid. If you got 4 A's and a C, what was the topic of conversation around the dinner table that night? It was that C, and how you could improve in that subject. The subjects where you got A's,



and showed real potential, got no attention at all. It was all about improving your weaknesses.

A much more sensible approach is to maximize your strengths: figure out what you are naturally good at and strive to become **great** at it! That is a much more fruitful, rewarding, fun way to do things in all aspects of life. Serving in the Kingdom of God is no different.

The third clue to discovering your perfect role in serving the Kingdom of God is your **experiences**. Or, to put it in the form of a question, “Where have you been? What experiences have you had in your life that you want to share with others?”

You may have positive experiences that you want to help other people experience as well. For example, if someone has adopted children in their family, they can be tremendous advocates for adoption, because they know what it’s like. They have experienced the joys of adoption, and are well-equipped to share those with others.

Conversely, you may have had negative experiences, experiences that were really painful and hard. However, you survived, came through that experience stronger, and want to help people who are dealing with those same issues. For example, how many recovered drug addicts do you know who have gone on to help those who are still trapped in their addictions? It happens all the time, doesn’t it? Why? Because they possess a unique insight into the nature of drug addiction, insight that can’t be picked up from a book, so they can be a terrific help for others in overcoming addiction. They never would have wished for it in a million years, but they are allowing God to use that dark time in their life to serve other people.

The bottom line is that our experiences contribute to our make-up, to the very fiber of who we are. And what we have experienced in our lives is not accidental. God can use even your most difficult life experiences as a blessing: a blessing to you, and also a blessing to those around you.

A classic biblical example of this idea is the life of Joseph, “Jacob’s favorite son.” Joseph had so many gut-wrenching experiences...of sorrow, pain, and injustice. He could

# A CALL TO SERVICE

have very easily let bitterness swallow him whole. However, he didn't do that. He remained open to God using those trials in his life, and as a result, God worked mightily through Joseph – he not only saved the Egyptians from famine, but was able to save the life of his own family as well!

Joseph's statement to his brothers in Genesis 50:20 is classic: *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."* So I ask you: are you, as Joseph was, open to letting God use the experiences in your life to serve others, and to serve His Kingdom?

Your **passions**, your **gifts, talents, & abilities**, and your **experiences** – these combine to provide you with a roadmap that will help you get to your "sweet spot."

What is a sweet spot? It is a term that you will hear golfers use to describe that zone on the face of the club where the ball is meant to be struck. If you hit the golf ball on any part of the club other than the sweet spot, it won't go as far, usually won't go as straight, and the club will vibrate in your hands. You won't get as much out of the club as you could have, and moreover, you will feel like the club weighs 20 pounds in your hands.

Conversely, if a golfer strikes the ball with the sweet spot of his golf club, the ball will jump off the clubface, straight and far. In addition, the feel of good and true contact on the sweet spot is indescribable. It's like the club swings itself! Whereas a mis-hit takes the energy out of you, a shot hit on the sweet spot is energizing. You feel like you can play 36 more holes after a shot like that!

In the same way, if you are serving in your "sweet spot," in that area where your passions, strengths, and experiences all come together, you will serve with maximum effectiveness, and my guess is that it won't feel like drudgery at all. It will feel natural, and will be a source of joy to you.

There is one more element that you have to have in order to find your "sweet spot" of service – **Courage**. It is the last piece of the puzzle. After you have examined your passions, gifts, strengths, and experiences, offered them up to the Lord, and He has directed you to a ministry, you still need the courage to step out. It is intimidating to step



out of your comfort zone and try something new, isn't it? And for many of us, to serve the "least of these" is to step WAY out of our comfort zone!

So how do we get that courage? I think we get it by understanding that courage is not something to acquire; you don't just "get" courage. Rather it is something to be developed.

Listen to the words of U.S. Senator John McCain:

Courage is like a muscle. The more we exercise it, the stronger it gets. I sometimes worry that our collective courage is growing weaker from disuse. We don't demand it from our leaders, and our leaders don't demand it from us. The courage deficit is both our problem and our fault. As a result, too many leaders in the public and private sectors lack the courage necessary to honor their obligations to others and to uphold the essential values of leadership.

You don't have to go from zero to Mother Theresa. Just take the next step! Try a ministry! Experiment! Keep trying things! And most importantly, keep following the Lord. In that process, you will discover that courage is being developed, just like a muscle, until one day you will discover that you possess more courage than you ever dreamed possible.

In Session 4 we mentioned that service can be done in small, spontaneous ways and in big, structured ways. There are many opportunities for service in "big ways" both inside and outside the church walls. During the class time this week you will be given a list that highlights structured opportunities for service.

An Orlando church has a neat concept called "niceSERVE." Once a quarter, more than 1,000 members (half of their membership) show up to spend a half-day serving in several targeted, community social service organizations. Families work together; small groups work together; relationships are deepened; and souls refreshed.

The pages that follow have an assessment to help you discover your "sweet spot" for service. With it, you will be able to identify organizations that serve where your heart already is. All you have to do now is take that first step. So will you?

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## PASSION FOR SERVICE ASSESSMENT

### With my MONEY . . .

If you were to forgo something that costs **money** and contribute that money toward serving the “least of these” which of the groups below would you send the money to? (Write the two choices that you would support.)

#### Widows, such as...

- Death of Spouse
- Single Again
- Single Mom
- Deployed Military Spouse

#### Orphans, such as...

- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Abused Children
- Children at Risk

#### Poor, such as...

- Hungry
- Homeless
- Need Jobs
- Housing

#### Needy, such as...

- Pornography Addiction
- Drug/Alcohol Addiction
- Seniors Shut-In
- Prisons

#### Strangers, such as...

- Muslim Community
- Homosexuals
- Immigrant

#### Sick, such as...

- Terminal Illness
- Disabled
- Mental Illness
- HIV/AIDS

#### Oppressed, such as...

- Working Poor
- Without Affordable Health Insurance
- Unborn

#### Broken Hearted, such as...

- Divorce
- Grieving
- Domestic Abuse
- Job Loss

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First Choice

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Second Choice



**PASSION FOR SERVICE ASSESSMENT**

With my **TIME** . . .

If you were to “fast” from something that takes **time**, and then volunteer that time in serving others, who would you most want to serve? Let’s say you found 2 hours a week that you could volunteer, which of the groups below would you contact to serve? (Write the two choices that you would support.)

**Widows, such as...**

- Death of Spouse
- Single Again
- Single Mom
- Deployed Military Spouse

**Orphans, such as...**

- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Abused Children
- Children at Risk

**Poor, such as...**

- Hungry
- Homeless
- Need Jobs
- Housing

**Needy, such as...**

- Pornography Addiction
- Drug/Alcohol Addiction
- Seniors Shut-In
- Prisons

**Strangers, such as...**

- Muslim Community
- Homosexuals
- Immigrant

**Sick, such as...**

- Terminal Illness
- Disabled
- Mental Illness
- HIV/AIDS

**Oppressed, such as...**

- Working Poor
- Without Affordable Health Insurance
- Unborn

**Broken Hearted, such as...**

- Divorce
- Grieving
- Domestic Abuse
- Job Loss

---

First Choice

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Second Choice

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## PASSION FOR SERVICE ASSESSMENT

### With my HEART . . .

Our **hearts** are touched in different ways and at different depths by certain situations; not because it's logical, but because we emotionally connect with the person or situation in need. What touches your heart? Of the groups below, which touch your heart most? (Write the two choices that you would support.)

#### Widows, such as...

- Death of Spouse
- Single Again
- Single Mom
- Deployed Military Spouse

#### Orphans, such as...

- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Abused Children
- Children at Risk

#### Poor, such as...

- Hungry
- Homeless
- Need Jobs
- Housing

#### Needy, such as...

- Pornography Addiction
- Drug/Alcohol Addiction
- Seniors Shut-In
- Prisons

#### Strangers, such as...

- Muslim Community
- Homosexuals
- Immigrant

#### Sick, such as...

- Terminal Illness
- Disabled
- Mental Illness
- HIV/AIDS

#### Oppressed, such as...

- Working Poor
- Without Affordable Health Insurance
- Unborn

#### Broken Hearted, such as...

- Divorce
- Grieving
- Domestic Abuse
- Job Loss

---

First Choice

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Second Choice



**PASSION FOR SERVICE ASSESSMENT**

**With my VOTE . . .**

These groups all receive some form of government attention. For which of the groups below would you **vote** to secure or increase support from the government? (Write the two choices that you would support.)

**Widows, such as...**

- Death of Spouse
- Single Again
- Single Mom
- Deployed Military Spouse

**Orphans, such as...**

- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Abused Children
- Children at Risk

**Poor, such as...**

- Hungry
- Homeless
- Need Jobs
- Housing

**Needy, such as...**

- Pornography Addiction
- Drug/Alcohol Addiction
- Seniors Shut-In
- Prisons

**Strangers, such as...**

- Muslim Community
- Homosexuals
- Immigrant

**Sick, such as...**

- Terminal Illness
- Disabled
- Mental Illness
- HIV/AIDS

**Oppressed, such as...**

- Working Poor
- Without Affordable Health Insurance
- Unborn

**Broken Hearted, such as...**

- Divorce
- Grieving
- Domestic Abuse
- Job Loss

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First Choice

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Second Choice



# A CALL TO SERVICE

**Application** – as a result of this session I will do the following...

With my life...

In my community...

Through my church...

May God guide you as you  
“make your faith matter.”

## S e s s i o n 6

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# **PARTICIPATING IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE**

Serving by Being the Voice of the Voiceless

By Charlie Stuart

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

*Luke 4: 18-19*



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.





**COMPLETE PAGES 113-116 BEFORE READING THE TEXT THAT FOLLOWS**

Questions to ask your friends, co-workers and family members this week:

1. In your opinion, what is the Christian's role as it relates to government?

2. Do you believe America was founded as a Christian nation? Why or why not?

Questions for you to answer this week:

Name the current elected officials holding the following offices for whom you can vote:

- City Commission \_\_\_\_\_
- City Mayor \_\_\_\_\_
- County Commission \_\_\_\_\_
- County Mayor \_\_\_\_\_
- State Representative \_\_\_\_\_
- State Senator \_\_\_\_\_
- Governor \_\_\_\_\_
- U.S. House Member \_\_\_\_\_
- U.S. Senators (2) \_\_\_\_\_

# A CALL TO SERVICE

 **Read & Reflect: Mark 12: 13-17, Matthew 22: 15-22, Acts 22: 22-29, Acts 25: 7-12**

What is the Christian's role as it relates to government?

Was America founded as a "Christian nation?" Explain.

How does "prayer in public school" relate to the "separation of church and state?"

What role, financially, does the church in America play in serving the "least of these?"



Name a social movement in America's history that happened because of the faith community? Has the government taken over that role? If yes, how and why?

What would you say if you learned that the vast majority of services to the "least of these" in America are paid for by a government check?

Are American values the same thing as Christian values? Why or why not?



# A CALL TO SERVICE

When you last voted for a federal office-seeker, what was his or her position on the issues directly affecting the “least of these?”

Is “illegal immigration” an issue of concern to you? Should it be of concern to the faith community? If so, in what way?

Where do you get information on candidates before you vote? Where don't you go to get information?

Name a current politician you admire for his/her character and morals? What is his/her position on the “least of these?”



**AS YOU READ THE FOLLOWING, REVISIT YOUR PRE-SESSION ANSWERS**

Some people believe that the faith community serves best by abstaining from any involvement with the political process, except to vote. Others believe it is vital that our faith and its tenants be represented in the political arena. Still others believe that the goal of the faithful should be to control the political system, even to the extent of creating a theo-democracy – making it the rule that only Christians are worthy of serving in government.

As people of faith, we are called to be engaged in the public arena we know as politics. When we doubt our place in the political process, we need only recall the words of Jesus appealing to people to care for the common good and the well-being of our neighbor.

When we wonder whether we should be part of the election process, we need only remember Jesus' witness of challenging the powers and principalities in search of justice for the "least of these."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) From the "*Letter of Introduction*" by Reverend Linda Jaramillo, Executive Minister, United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries.

We believe that we are called to make our faith matter in every place we find ourselves, and that participating in the public square, particularly the political process, can have a profound influence on how the "least of these" are served.

In this session we will explore the intersection of faith, politics and public policy. We believe there are at least three civic actions believers are responsible to carry out: (1) voting responsibly; (2) speaking up for the "voiceless least of these;" and (3) participating effectively in the political process.

## **We Have a Biblical Responsibility to Participate**

As members of the faith community, we must remember that we hold dual citizenship – as Christians and as Americans. These citizenships are not the same, each owing allegiance to a very different source. Just as we cannot abstain from the role we have as a member of our family, or our community, or our local church – we cannot abstain from our proper role and responsibility in the public square.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

When Jesus talked about “render unto Caesar” (Mark 12:13-17; Matthew 22: 15-22) He was describing the dual citizenship we have as members of His kingdom, here on earth, as well as being citizens of the state where we live.

Jesus was not just speaking about a believer’s submission to governmental or spiritual authority – but also to the source of the authority. He knew the state’s authority comes from its power (sword) over people to compel them through fear to do or not do what the state demands of them. He also said that His kingdom’s authority is based on His moral law and that believers should let their actions be guided from His sacrificial love and His example of servant-hood.

Christianity is not simply a personal and private matter between an individual and God; it is also about community responsibility and faithfulness in public life—social, political, and economic. While this principle is neither new nor radical, it ought to guide behavior of individual Christians and Christian communities.

Moreover, the Constitution does not encourage Americans to keep our faith and our public life separate. What the First Amendment says is, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” which means that there shall not be a single state religion, that all people of faith are free to practice their religion in this country, and that our government should not favor any one faith tradition. The separation of Christian life from public affairs creates an artificial boundary between the church and the state; it also makes an artificial boundary between our faith and the world.

Christianity is not an individualistic faith; rather, Christians are called to live in community and to be active in the world in ways that witness to our faith in all areas of our lives. <sup>(2)</sup>

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(2) From To Do Justice by Rebecca Todd Peters & Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty (2008).

When the Apostle Paul claimed Roman citizenship to avoid an unwarranted beating (Acts 22: 22-29), and before Festus to seek a hearing in Rome (Acts 25:7-12), he recognized the differences between the spiritual and state worlds – and so must we.

## Religious Freedom

Is there, should there be, a “separation between church and state” in America? **Yes!** And thank God there is! Without this, you may not be allowed to practice your



religious beliefs. The guarantee of religious freedom, coupled with the freedom to assemble, the freedom to speak, and the freedom of the press, make up the cornerstone upon which America was founded...and has prospered for over two centuries.

Yet, this question comes up repeatedly, raised mostly by those who claim that America was founded as a Christian nation. The founders of our nation went to extraordinary lengths to insure that **religion would play no role** in the government, and that **government would play no role in religion**.

When the states ratified the Bill of Rights in 1791, the United States of America became the **first government in history** created without a state religion or control of religion by the state.

Of all the revolutionary concepts espoused by the founders, this was, I think, the most revolutionary. For instance, these same founders, begrudgingly, allowed for slavery and refused equal standing before the law for women and children. But they addressed religion in a radical way.

These founders knew that the growth in population would come from outside our shores, bringing in faiths of all kinds and no kind from distant lands. This allowance for religious pluralism set America apart, and saved us from religious conflicts, both bloody and loud.

Now, here comes an unpopular statement among many in the Christian faith community: “America was not founded as a Christian nation.” By allowing for religious pluralism, the founders did not endorse any particular faith tradition. Rather – they allowed for the many sects of Christianity, as well as Judaism, Islam, deism, theism, humanism and even atheism.

The founders were influenced by concepts, ideals and principles contained in the Christian faith and tradition, but these are also found in many other faith traditions. It is precisely this argument – that the nation would have a single religious identity – that the founders wanted to avoid so that “freedom for all” would take place.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

To learn more, you can read what Dr. Dan Hayden and Dr. Paul Simmons wrote about religious freedom. Links to their articles can be found on Making Faith Matter’s website at [www.MakingFaithMatter.org](http://www.MakingFaithMatter.org).

## Whose Job is it? The Church? The Government?

Caring for the poor, the homeless, the hungry, the sick, and for those suffering from oppression in our culture is a clear and vital intersection where the faith community should be involved in the public square. However, even when faced with the knowledge that those most in need would go hungry, homeless or sick without government assistance – the faith community, all too often, still says taking care of the least of these is the church’s job only, not the government’s.

Many in the faith community think that their faith has little or nothing to do with their civic responsibility. Also, they have a significant “anti-government” and “anti-any tax” mind-set. It is not uncommon to hear believers say that the government should have nothing to do with “the least of these” issues – “the church should handle that.”

The truth is that Christians are doing a miserable job of caring for the physical needs of the poor. At present, the governments of the world account for nearly 95 percent of all the care to the aged, ill, and impoverished, and the evidence shows they are using it as a tool to spread atheism. Christians in America have the resources to do at least 10 times what we are presently doing for the poor, with little or no alteration of lifestyles. <sup>(3)</sup>

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(3) Excerpt from article titled “*Is Welfare Scriptural?*” written by Larry Burkett and published by Crown Financial Ministries.

We hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to free and fair elections and to the freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, communications media, and petition for redress of grievances without fear of reprisal; to the right to privacy; and to the guarantee of the rights to adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. <sup>(4)</sup>

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(4) From “*The Social Principles*” published by The General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church.



For centuries, churches have been places of sanctuary for the persecuted, afflicted and outcast. In America today these places of sanctuary take many forms – homeless shelters, after school care, health care for the poor – and for the greatest part these are funded by government.

All of the great social change movements in America began in the church: abolition of slavery; hospitals; schools; poverty relief; women’s suffrage; orphan care & adoption; civil rights; safety & dignity in the workplace, especially for children and women; and many more. Over decades, these initiatives have become the role of government – particularly where a national standard was required for conformity among the states.

In the modern era, the Great Depression overwhelmed the church’s ability to respond to the social needs, and the government, out of necessity (FDR’s New Deal), took on many of those needs, and set us on the road for government involvement in delivery of social goodwill.

Today, and for the past 50 years, the hard reality is that 6/7ths of the money spent on services to people in need in America comes through government funding (federal, state & local), and only 1/7th from all philanthropic, church, charities and not-for-profit organizations.<sup>(5)</sup>

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(5) Original source found in article by William Bennett and John DiIulio titled “What Good is Government?” published in *Commentary Magazine* in 1997.

It is said, “To find out what is important to someone, all you need to see is their checkbook and their calendar.” So it is with the government – and the “checkbook” of government is the budget. For instance, the American people, through the federal budget for fiscal year 2008, spent over \$3 trillion; and defense spending is almost twice that of direct spending on discretionary social and economic services (26 percent to 15 percent).

From a “budget as a moral document” point of view, this might say Americans place more value on defense than on those things talked about in “the least of these” compassion principles. While this comparison is an oversimplified example of the dilemma faced when understanding something so complex as the federal budget, it is

# A CALL TO SERVICE

important for people of faith to have a role and responsibility in the public arena and make sure the “least of these” have a voice...and a vote.

Progressives also need to challenge a core conservative view that private and religious charity is sufficient to the task of alleviating poverty. That is simply not true. In an important 1997 article in Commentary magazine\*—hardly a bastion of liberalism—William Bennett and John DiIulio made the crucial calculations: "If all of America's grant-making private foundations gave away all of their income and all of their assets, they could cover only a year's worth of current government expenditures on social welfare."

What would happen the next year?

They cited a study by Princeton's Julian Walpole of 125,000 charities, each with receipts of \$25,000 a year or more. Among them, they raised and spent \$350 billion annually. That sounds like a lot until you realize that this is only one-seventh of what is spent each year by federal, state, and local governments.

Bennett and DiIulio, neither of them enthusiasts of the old welfare state, concluded: "It is unlikely that Americans will donate much more than their present 2 percent of annual household income, or that corporate giving will take up any significant proportion of the slack in the event of future government reductions."<sup>(6)</sup>

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(6) Sojourners Magazine, "The Overlooked Schism: America's Religious Communities and the Battle Over Government" (April 2007) by E.J. Dionne, Jr.

What can we conclude, then, about the roles of the church and the government in providing for the “least of these”? For the faithful, it's **not** an either/or proposition...it takes both the government and the universal church!

## How Do We Impact the Government's Role?

The simple answer would seem to be “vote.” But, if we are to use our vote to influence the government, which we know represents 6/7ths of the spending on services to the “least of these,” we should be prepared to vote with the “least of these” in mind when pulling the lever. And that takes work and critical thinking, challenging the TV & radio “talking heads,” to get to how “least of these” issues are impacted by the candidates, and the policies they support.



If we are to vote God’s values, we must discern what they are, and what they aren’t, for ourselves. Our votes should be filtered through the lens of how we feel God is speaking to us, guiding us to use our vote for His kingdom, here on earth.

While there are those who believe Americans must segregate their religious beliefs from their civic involvement, that opinion doesn’t square with Scripture. Romans 13 tells us that God Himself ordained the civil magistrate, the government, so who are we to shun involvement in it? From the Bible we know that men like Joseph and Daniel were a part of the government in their day, serving for God’s glory.

Christians should register to vote, educate themselves on the positions of the candidates, and vote for those whose stances most closely square with God’s values.<sup>(7)</sup>

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(7) From *iLiveValues.com*, a program of The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, of the Southern Baptist Convention.

One area that causes confusion is when we try to equate American values with Christian values.

### American vs. Christian Values

In recent years, many Christians have confused their citizenship in the kingdom of God with their American citizenship – often equating them as “one in the same.” They are not the same. They are different. What makes me an American is not what makes me a Christian, and what makes me a Christian does not make me an American.

Our times cry out for a new politics of justice. This is no partisan issue. It doesn’t matter if you’re a liberal or a conservative; Jesus is both and neither. It doesn’t matter if you’re a Democrat or Republican; Jesus is both and neither. We need a faith that takes on the corruption of both parties. We need a faith that challenges complacency of all power. Let’s get Jesus back.<sup>(8)</sup>

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(8) From an article by Bill Moyers entitled “*Democracy in the Balance*,” published in the August, 2004 Sojourners Magazine.



# A CALL TO SERVICE

Sometimes Christian and American values are similar. Sometimes American values contradict Christian values. For instance:

<u>American Value</u>	<u>Christian Value</u>
Self reliance	Reliance on God
Leader oriented	Servant oriented
Respect through power	Respect through love
Pursuit of happiness	Pursuit of holiness
Take care of self	Take care of others
Make war when necessary	Make peace all the time
Love self more than others	Love neighbors/strangers as self
Get and keep all you can	Give everything away

In recent years, many faith leaders and congregants encouraged adding non-biblical issues to the “family values” platform, issues like: cutting taxes, increasing military spending, cutting funds for education & social services, smaller government, and embracing war as a first choice. And while these are clearly debatable and important – they reflect American values, not Christian values.

The real questions for us should be, “How can we represent American values consistent with our Christian beliefs?”

When I was running for Congress, an often asked question from fellow believers was related to “cutting welfare.” Usually, they would say that many of the people on welfare take advantage of the system. And while I could not dispute that statement, I would ask them, “When can a child be self-sufficient, not reliant upon his/her parents for the basics of food, shelter, security, healthcare and education?”

No matter their answer, we all agreed that a child should not be condemned to a life of recurring poverty, ill health and hunger. It’s not the child’s fault. It is not a Christian value nor is it an American value to leave a child helpless and hurting. When we see all who our gaze falls upon as our neighbor (as Jesus defines neighbor in the parable of the Good Samaritan), our mission becomes clear, doesn’t it?



## Preparing to Vote

“If you don’t vote, don’t gripe.” We’ve heard this before, but perhaps it should read like this, “Vote. No excuses!” Participating with your vote in the American system of democracy should not be an option...it should be a minimum acceptable action.

**How** to vote is not a subject for this course. With the complexity of issues surrounding the political process – personal characteristics of the candidates, their performance history, their stance on the issues and policies, and “greater good” situations where a careful balancing of negative against positive elements may require votes that are distasteful – it is not for the faith community to tell anyone who to vote for.

It is, however, appropriate for the faithful to be guided, spiritually, in how to **prepare** to vote. Unfortunately, many religious organizations have used “voter guides” to promote candidates by unfair comparisons. At best, this puts the emphasis on the wrong element for guiding the faithful in voting. Many churches call their members to prayer on or near election day, seeking God’s wisdom on how to vote...and this is good, very good.

What we should be doing with our vote is preparing our minds with information about the candidates and issues; seeking how they align with our faith and civic values; and then voting our conscience (which is why voting is done in private, to free us from intimidation).

Know who is on the ballot. In my community of Orlando, Florida – a city resident can vote for the following offices: city commission, city mayor, county commission, county mayor, school board member, state representative, state senator, governor, U.S. House member, two U.S. Senators, and President. There are more, but these have a more direct impact on the issues of the “least of these.”

Most of the spending decisions for these issues are made at the city, county, state and federal levels. It is here that money is appropriated and spent for health care, hunger programs, justice, education, seniors, abused children, etc.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

When preparing to vote, as important as knowing the background and positions of the candidate is the preparation of our own mind and heart to cast a faithful ballot. This is best done by concentrating our “quiet time” (prayer time, meditation, etc.) in the days before the election on the Word of God...specifically on those passages that give us a glimpse of God’s own heart for the people He speaks so often for and about – the “least of these.”

As an example, just before you vote, you might read Matthew 25: 31-46 (“least of these”) as a guide and to focus your thinking. We are convinced that when we go to the polls with the heart and mind of God foremost in our minds and hearts – we will make a decision more consistent with God’s call for our lives.

## Speaking Up

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “The time, my friends, has come when silence is betrayal. That time is now.” He was speaking of the moral injustice of racism and bigotry – and his words can also apply to support for the “least of these.”

Each of us has a tool of incredible power. The Bible speaks often of it, and cautions us to control its use. I’m speaking of our tongue. In the Bible, the tongue is an illustration of what we say with our mouths – and what we say, the very words, have power for good or bad, magnified by the relationship we have with the hearer of our words. This is true of any words we speak – and especially true when we speak about the “least of these.” What we say, when we say it, and how we say it will have a powerful impact on what others think about this group of people so special to God.

Unfortunately, far too often members of the faith community speak with anger, disrespect, fear, and even hate, about the poor and oppressed among us. This is clearly not an example of loving our neighbor – in fact it is seen as the opposite by those seeking to know about Jesus and His followers.

An example of disrespect by the faith community was the **demonizing of Islam** coupled with false accusations about Barack Obama’s religious background during the



2008 presidential campaign. Please take a moment and read General Colin Powell's powerful remarks about how this level of disrespect has no place in America, particularly from the faithful. He was speaking on Meet the Press with Tom Brokaw:

I'm also troubled by what members of the (Republican) party say. And it is permitted to be said such things as, "Well, you know that Mr. Obama is a Muslim." Well, the correct answer is, he is not a Muslim, he's a Christian. He's always been a Christian.

But the really right answer is, "What if he is?" Is there something wrong with being a Muslim in this country? The answer's no, that's not America. Is there something wrong with some seven-year-old Muslim-American kid believing that he or she could be president?

Yet, I have heard senior members of my own party drop the suggestion, "He's a Muslim and he might be associated with terrorists." This is not the way we should be doing it in America.

I feel strongly about this particular point because of a picture I saw in a magazine. It was a photo essay about troops who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. And one picture at the tail end of this photo essay was of a mother in Arlington Cemetery, and she had her head on the headstone of her son's grave.

And as the picture focused in, you could see the writing on the headstone. And it gave his awards—Purple Heart, Bronze Star—showed that he died in Iraq, gave his date of birth, date of death. He was 20 years old.

And then, at the very top of the headstone, it didn't have a Christian cross, it didn't have the Star of David, it had a crescent and a star of the Islamic faith. And his name was Kareem Rashad Sultan Khan, and he was an American. He was born in New Jersey. He was 14 years old at the time of 9/11, and he waited until he could go serve his country, and he gave his life.

Now, we have got to stop polarizing ourselves in this way.

Another example of disrespect is how the issue of **"illegal immigrants"** is discussed around the water cooler, in emails and on TV. This issue has been front and center, politically, since 2005; and the tone of the debate, even among faith voters, has been conducted in a way that does not reflect the compassion called for in the Gospels.



# A CALL TO SERVICE

Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CCIR), in their statement of principles, puts the challenge this way:

We call for an end to the unproductive, divisive, and fear-driven anti-immigrant rhetoric in the media, which has often castigated all immigrants, regardless of citizenship status, and derailed attempts at true reform. As Christian leaders...we commit to fostering civil dialogue on immigration in our churches and in our communities.

If you use email, you've probably received "**attack emails**" from your friends. They are the ones that come to you from someone you know, carrying with it their implicit endorsement of the content. Unfortunately, these viral emails concerning politics are seldom factual and too often unfairly attack a person's character. Consider this excerpt from an email I received recently from a former Bible study member.

The Axis of Idiots – Jimmy Carter, you are the father of the Islamic Nazi movement. You threw the Shah under the bus, welcomed the Ayatollah home, and then lacked the spine to confront the terrorists when they took our embassy and our people hostage. You're the runner-in-chief.

It goes on to attack other leaders, and the tone gets even uglier, if you can imagine that. There is never a place for an assault on someone's character.

Now I'm not going to defend Jimmy Carter's presidency, but the faith community should remember that he was an "evangelical" before the term was popular. He is a Nobel Laureate for Peace for his breakthrough efforts in bringing the Israelis and Egyptians together.

And President Carter continues to dedicate his life to positions and principles based in his faith through the work of The Carter Center.

The Carter Center's slogan is "Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope." And the first lines of the welcome on their website rings with "least of these" language:

The Carter Center is committed to advancing human rights and alleviating unnecessary human suffering. Join us in creating a world in which every man, woman, and child has the opportunity to enjoy good health and live in peace.



In addition, here are a few quotes by Jimmy Carter that further illustrate a man who lives his faith – and someone unworthy of vitriolic assault by believers.

You can't divorce religious belief and public service! I've never detected any conflict between God's will and my political duty. If you violate one, you violate the other.

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I have one life and one chance to make it count for something . . . I'm free to choose what that something is, and the something I've chosen is my faith. Now, my faith goes beyond theology and religion and requires considerable work and effort. My faith demands -- this is not optional -- my faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference.

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A strong nation, like a strong person, can afford to be gentle, firm, thoughtful, and restrained. It can afford to extend a helping hand to others. It's a weak nation, like a weak person, that must behave with bluster and boasting and rashness and other signs of insecurity.

In the current (this is written in mid-2009) national dialogue about reforming the health care system, I shudder to think that protesters or participants in rallies carrying signs and posters, some depicting President Obama's face altered to look like the Joker of Batman fame, or worse, with a Hitler mustache, might be of the faith community.

Also, President George W. Bush spoke for supporting health care for children and was ridiculed by many in the faith community who said he had abandoned his political beliefs; this, after he had taken considerable criticism for stating that his faith informed his decisions.

On this issue – healthcare – it is incumbent on believers to participate, and to do so in a loving, winsome and civil manner.

Dr. Joel Hunter was quoted in the Orlando Sentinel, when introducing a conference call-in broadcast with many religious leaders to speak about health care reform, as saying:

This isn't about backing any particular legislation, this is to identify people of faith to be advocates for reform and civil debate.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

Paul, in his letter to Titus (3:1-2) says, *“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”*

Moreover, people of faith have a moral responsibility to be a constructive part of making health care secure and affordable for all Americans.

So, what should we say, and how should we say it, to represent the kingdom of God here on earth as Jesus showed us?

**First** – standing up for the “least of these” is most valuable when we do it “on the spot,” especially in “our crowd” of friends and family. It might be at the dinner table, or around the coffee at a Bible study...it could be in an email exchange (particularly those that get passed around containing false messages).

At some point we have all been present when a demeaning joke about race was told; or when a slur was said against a homeless person; or when we hear a statement about another culture, nation or race as being “less than” us.

Or maybe it is when we are directly asked, “What do you think about \_\_\_\_\_?”

The point is, we don’t have to look for ways to speak up. We just have to be sensitive when someone else is speaking...and **join in**. And we should remember the power of words spoken – and that our silence in a situation is seen as consent and agreement. An ancient proverb says, “I can’t hear what you’re saying because of the thunder of how you act.” When we are silent in the face of ridicule of the “least of these” – we join in the ridicule.

The best way to say what’s on your heart is to stick close to the truth – and the best way to speak up for the “least of these” is to remember that we are all God’s children; we are all in this life together; that God loves us all, equally; and that we are the kingdom of God here on earth.

**Second** – speaking out can also be in a more formal or prepared way. It can come when you get the chance to pray in public. It might be when you are leading a Bible study or speaking in a work related meeting. Again, the words you say will be received in



the context that, first, you spoke them; and, second, the “compassion in your eyes” that others see and feel.

**Third** – don’t wait for someone else to do it. For far too long we have left the speaking to pastors and others in faith leadership. While they are certainly qualified and entitled – we magnify their words by joining with them in promoting God’s love, in action, for the “least of these.”

Many pastors avoid making more than a passing comment about civic responsibility because they think it would create tension and division within the membership. Other pastors think limiting their comments and effort to election time and the very basic issues of abortion and marriage are enough. This is summed up by what a pastor friend told me, “Quite frankly, I’m scared to death of politics.”

And most pastors genuinely don’t know where they would get the time, the freedom, and the resources to help their congregation embrace their role in civic responsibility. And that’s where you can play a pivotal role in supporting others in their support for the “least of these” with a phone call, a note, a word after a service – just let your pastor know of your personal support for the “least of these”, and how much you appreciate his or her support of them, too.

**Fourth** – we can speak up for the “least of these” by practicing our religious beliefs, not just pushing for public displays of religion. We all know that pushing religion into the public square does not mean that people of faith will live out the principles of their faith.

For instance, fighting to have the Ten Commandments displayed in a public building doesn’t make it more likely people will obey them. Rather, it borders on making idols out of the tablets instead of engraving their meaning and application in the hearts of people.

People who practice their beliefs will live according to moral and ethical standards their religion teaches them. They will be witnesses against the tawdriness of the culture around them. They will be examples of the people God expects us to be.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

They will be that because they understand and live by the tenets of their traditions.

That is the practice of religion. It is different altogether from the public display of religion. <sup>(9)</sup>

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(9) From *Faith and Politics: How the "Moral Values" Debate Divides America and How to Move Forward Together* by Senator John Danforth.

## Impacting the Political Process

“The squeaky wheel gets the grease.” It’s true, isn’t it? The challenge in providing an effective influence on the political process is to do so while still bearing a positive witness for Christ.

### Speak For, Not Against

Frankly, and unfortunately, the faith community has modeled “un-Christian” participation in the political process, and this has been a leading reason why so many seekers are avoiding the established church.

As an individual, we can make our best impact on the “least of these” issues and for the image of Christ by speaking FOR the issues, not just being a loud, angry voice against.

For over 25 years I umpired Little League baseball – almost exclusively for 10-12 year old boys and girls. In the hundreds of games I attended, I can count on two hands the number of coaches who were encouraging and positive to the players.

In a game meant to be “played” (not work) by boys and girls (not men and women) in a safe way, while learning the best lessons of sport (sportsmanship, effort, competition, consequences) – the vast majority of coaches (usually parents) and most parent/fans embarrassed their children with their behavior. They chanted for opposing players to fail – “he can’t hit!” – screamed at the umpire on nearly every call – “you’re blind!” – and humiliated players when they made an error – “get your head in the game!”

Which is why, now almost a decade since retiring from umpiring, I can still name those coaches who made a real, positive and valuable impact on their players by being positive examples. They are, by the way...Ben, Gary, Sid, Burt, Bill, Rip and Mel.



Maybe if we imagined that politics was a Little League game between two teams, each earnest about their issues, and each with a deep respect for the game – and that we are positive coaches charged with providing real constructive cheering for what we believe – maybe then our behavior would be more appealing.

## Who We Elect Makes the Decisions

We should remember that that America is based on a republic form of government, where the people elect representatives to make decisions on our behalf. You might say that, as voters for candidates, our real goal is to support and elect the person who best represents our personal values.

Impacting issues affecting the “least of these” is best done by electing people whose background proves they are sensitive to, and supportive of, “least of these” policies. When studying a candidate, policy or issue – we might ask one or more of the following questions.

Precede your question with a statement about the importance of “least of these” issues to you.

I believe how our government serves the “least of these” – the poor, oppressed, sick and suffering from injustice – both in America and around the world is important to the future security of our nation and for securing a future that will mark us as being truly civilized.

Then ask brief questions on specific issues coupled with a “what have you done” follow-on.

- Q: What domestic spending changes will you support that directly affect the “least of these?” What have you done (in office, in your life) that gives evidence that you will do it?
- Q: Who do you think are those in our country that are faced with injustice and oppression, and how will you protect them? What have you done (in office, in your life) that gives evidence that you will do it?
- Q: How will you protect children when funding that goes to their parents is cut? What have you done (in office, in your life) that gives evidence that you will do it?

# A CALL TO SERVICE

Q: What is your position on requiring staff led prayer in public school? What have you done (in office, in your life) that gives evidence that you will do it?

Q: What role does your faith play in the decisions you make when serving in this office? What have you done (in office, in your life) that gives evidence that you will do it?

## Study the “Best Way”

In his book, A New Kind of Conservative, Dr. Joel Hunter explores the role of the believer in the political process. In addition to suggesting that we study issues, policies and politicians from a variety of sources (newspapers, periodicals, television, Internet, radio) Dr. Hunter also suggests a “forum for Christian political dialogue” – a safe place where people of faith can discuss issues and ideas without fear of anger or distrust. Perhaps you might consider starting a “making faith matter” dialogue group that meets periodically to talk through ways we can, in the public square, affect “least of these” issues.

## Ask Questions, Expect Answers...Don’t Make Speeches

One way to set yourself apart when approaching an elected official or candidate for public office is to refrain from “stating your position” and, instead, ask for their position. By doing this – in a kind, firm, simple way – you can make your own decision about supporting them with your vote.

I learned this during the campaigns when someone would approach me (in person, by phone, letter or email) not angry and yelling, but simply asking what I thought about an issue. What we all know is that when faced with anger, our first reaction is to respond in kind.

Another suggestion is to ask not only what their position is on an issue, but also ask what experience or background they have that validates their position. It is one thing to say “I’m for this” – it’s another thing to say “Here’s what I’ve done about this.”



## Unintended Consequences

Many times a law or policy is adopted producing unintended consequences. It's like the "side effects" when taking a medication. So it is with making laws, even when it's the people voting directly on the law via a referendum.

From time-to-time, there are ballot initiatives at the local and state levels that can have a direct impact on the "least of these." For instance, in Florida, we have a lottery to support education. But from the very beginning, most of the billions of dollars a year flowing through the lottery come from those who can least afford it. They are led to believe they can "hit it big" – and it is discouraging to see people lined up in convenience stores spending dollars they need to use for the basics with no statistical chance of winning.

What is equally discouraging is that the legislature endorsed this initiative on the promise of using the money for a "greater good" of added and incremental money for public education – but the first budget cycle after it went into effect they **cut** public education funding, using the lottery to make up the difference rather than serve as a supplement. All this to prevent a possible tax increase to fully fund education – but, at best, the unintended consequence has been a damaging "tax" on the very people who can least afford it, and who most need access to a quality education to help them change their economic plight.

Although most churches were against the lottery – it passed with a two-to-one margin in 1986. And once in place, it is nearly impossible to undo.

Let us pray and watch for the next time such a law comes before the representatives or the people – and remember that our voice and vote can make a difference for those who are voiceless in the process – the "least of these."

# A CALL TO SERVICE

## Conclusion

The “least of these” have the least voice in the public square. Jesus knew this, which is why in His first public statement about His ministry (Luke 4:17-21), He proclaimed:

*And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:*

*“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”*

*Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

**“To set at liberty those who are oppressed.”** Not bad marching orders for our mission as believers in the public square, is it?



**Application** – as a result of this session I will do the following...

With my life...

In my community...

Through my church...

May God guide you as you  
“make your faith matter.”



## S e s s i o n 7

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# **SOLUTIONS vs. SHOUTING MATCHES**

Speaking Truth in Love

By Barbara Stuart

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

*James 3: 17*



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.





**COMPLETE PAGES 139-142 BEFORE READING THE REST OF THIS SESSION**

Questions to ask your friends, co-workers and family members this week:

1. What do you enjoy the most and dislike the most about election campaigns?

2. Do you think it is difficult to have a healthy dialogue when you really disagree with someone? Why?

Questions for you to answer this week:

What are your thoughts about the “tone” of political dialogue today, particularly among believers?

# A CALL TO SERVICE

Compare and contrast the American value of diversity - freedom of thought - and the ideological demands of the “red” and “blue” parties?

Does it “cost too much” - in terms of the personal attacks, misinformation, and invective - to run for office? If yes, why do we put up with it?

 ***Read & Reflect: Proverbs 11: 12***

Share your thoughts about this statement: “Christians are called to healthy debate and disagreements, but must stop short of disruption of relationships.”

 **Read & Reflect: Matthew 12: 24-30**

How did Jesus respond to the slander of the Pharisees?

 **Read & Reflect: Matthew 12: 3-7, Matthew 21:13 & 16, Matthew 22:31-32 & 43-44**

What dialogue technique did Jesus use?

 **Read & Reflect: James 3**

What caution does He give us regarding the use of our words?

# A CALL TO SERVICE

 **Read & Reflect: Proverbs 10:17, Proverbs 23:12**

What do these verses tell us about healthy conversations?

What does it take to respect an opinion that differs than your own?

On a scale of 1-10, how well do you think you listen? Ask 3 other people to "score" you as well - encourage them to be painfully honest!

Good  
Listener

Poor  
Listener

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

**AS YOU READ THE FOLLOWING, REVISIT YOUR PRE-SESSION ANSWERS**

It has become a national pastime for Americans to debate politics. Everyone seems to have a strong opinion and delights in sharing it with great zeal. This happens even though the “manners our mamas taught us” were to NOT discuss politics and religion in polite society. I’m afraid our society has not been “polite” for some time; there is a marked lack of civility, particularly in the political arena. (Read P. M. Forni’s Choosing Civility for more on this topic). I’m afraid that many believers have fallen into a distasteful habit of using words that are not “acceptable in His sight” when discussing politics.

In Dr. Joel Hunter’s book, Right Wing, Wrong Bird, he lists seven reasons why the current strategy of the religious right won’t fly with most conservative Christians. The first one is “wrong tone.”

Ideas compete; radicals attack. Christians can and should debate, but leaders of the religious right have fostered a personal war. Whereas creating emergencies and enemies is good for media ratings and fundraising, it is a turnoff to reasonable people who want a solution rather than a shouting match. A better approach is obvious and needed: respectful and reasonable competition of ideas, trusting that the Spirit of truth will guide conservative Christians to effective action.

When my husband decided to run for political office, our campaign consultant gave me a little book called Mean Business. I guess he was trying to prepare us for what was ahead. I decided not to read it because I would rather lose an election than lose my character and become “mean.”

What do you think about this comment by Dr. Greg Boyd, Senior Pastor of Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minnesota?

And if there's anything that I've learned from conservatives and liberals is that you can have all the right political answers and still be mean, and nobody wants to listen to you if you're mean, you know. And I think that one of the things that we can do is learn to disagree well. And I think there is a new conversation happening with Evangelicalism in post-Religious Right America that is much healthier, and we can actually learn to disagree well and wrestle with hard truth.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

As much as I love America and our system of government, I believe that our electoral process has become terribly flawed and requires an overhaul. People have wondered out loud “why” everyone seems to be so angry. My years of study and work as both a professional communicator and a student of political science tell me that this extreme polarization has happened partly as a result of fear-mongering, arrogant, and extreme language by the two political parties. They have done this in an attempt to galvanize support. While this is not a “new” technique – the tone has definitely been “dialed up” and the distribution increased with modern media outlets.

What is dumbfounding to me is that this occurs while one of our American values is diversity – allowing for freedom of thought. The truly insidious part of the extreme language is the portrayal that there is only “one” right way and that everyone who does not agree with it is wrong, stupid or evil...this doesn’t sound very accepting of diversity! This is nothing short of arrogance on steroids! We are told in Proverbs 6:16 that *“The Lord hates haughtiness and a false witness.”* I think both parties could be convicted of this.

President Jimmy Carter talks about this in his book [Our Endangered Values: America’s Moral Crisis](#).

Nowadays, the Washington scene is completely different, with almost every issue decided on a strictly partisan basis. Probing public debate on key legislative decisions is almost a thing of the past. Basic arguments are made between lobbyist and legislative leaders, often within closed party caucuses where rigid discipline is paramount. Even personal courtesies, which had been especially cherished in the U.S. Senate, are no longer considered to be sacrosanct. This deterioration in harmony, cooperation, and collegiality in the Congress, is, at least in part, a result of the fundamentalist tendencies and their religious and political impact.

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More recent debates over these same issues have caused almost unprecedented divisions within our country, with both Democratic and Republican Parties relying on vituperative commercials to win elections, congressional deliberations increasingly characterized by partisan animosity, and our entire population having adopted “red” and “blue” as habitual descriptive phrases within and between states.



Some of the anger that is being experienced today also could be related to the rapid rate of change in our society. In Right Wing, Wrong Bird, Dr. Hunter says,

Many Christians believe our laws are beginning to undermine the foundational principles upon which our nation stands. Evangelicals are not the only ones becoming uneasy with the trends in society. In our personal need for security and certainty, we are tempted to assume that what elevates our group is best for the entire nation.

Just imagine how different (better) it would be if negative political advertising became grounds for dismissal as a candidate (I don't believe this level of censorship of slander would violate our right of speech) and each candidate would to be required to submit answers to a set of identical questions that would appear unedited in print (free newspapers, the Web) that would allow citizens to compare and contrast the candidates. And what if the campaign period were limited to only six weeks prior to an election? And what if candidates were each provided an equal amount of money to spend campaigning? Well, I can dream.

As believers, we are responsible for participating in the public arena, as was discussed in Session 6. What we need to learn is how to hold a discussion that is not disgusting; how to disagree without being disagreeable, and how to agree to disagree. I believe that we are called to healthy dialogue as a means of peacemaking. Our motivation is not to "win" but rather, "as much as is possible, to live peaceably with all men." Does this mean we will never disagree? No! This side of heaven, there will be disagreements. However – we are to disagree without reaching the point of disruption – where relationships fall apart. Modeling Christ-like conversation is attractive to others – it allows our light to shine. Anything less tarnishes our testimony.

Most often, Jesus used a gentle teaching style of dialogue. And, on occasion, He did have disagreements with people...but He did so in a sound, **wise** teaching style. For example, the Pharisees slandered Jesus in Matthew 12:24-30 and He retorted by making a reasonable case. Looking at Matthew 12:3-7; 21:13 & 16; 22:31-32, and 43-44, Jesus used a very effective method quoting from the Old Testament to settle the argument.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

Remember, the Old Testament was the basis of His life. Only on rare occasion did Jesus use angry rhetoric. The most familiar story is when He chased the money changers out of the temple. All four Gospel writers capture this story (it must have made an impression on them!).

One of the major themes of the book of Proverbs is the use of the tongue and words. Speech is powerful and can be used for good or evil. What we say to someone or in response to someone reflects on who we are. Matthew 12:34-37 also talks about this. And James 3 addresses it as well saying it takes a wise person to master the tongue.

Why is healthy dialogue so difficult?

One reason is because we rarely see it modeled! Another is that we are “wired” to win – to be competitive. And another is that it takes practice. So, with that introduction, here are some practical suggestions for your consideration.

**Be kind.** Remember that candidates and elected officials are HUMAN. They have feelings, families, and are not completely immune from harsh criticisms. How many times have you heard a fellow believer say, “so and so (name of an elected official) is an idiot!” The Golden Rule comes to mind here. Would you want someone to call you names? You can disagree with someone without having to lower yourself to name-calling. These name-calling folks are very free with their opinions but rarely have the courage to run for election.

**Be careful not to become a “single-issue” voter.** Elected officials will, by necessity, have to be informed about, and vote on, a wide range of issues. Be interested in a candidate’s character and his/her stand on many important issues.

**Be open.** Be willing to really listen and perhaps change your thinking. Proverbs 10:17 and 23:12 talk about the wisdom in listening to a different viewpoint. Suspend judgment for a moment and say to yourself: “Could they be right?”

Consider taking a “**media fast**” around election time. My experience with political advertising is that it is so flawed as to be worthless. It reminds me a little of the raging mob appearing before Pilate. The only ones who profit from it are the news



outlets and political consultants. DO NOT use advertising as your source of information about candidates. Instead, use other more thoughtful and reasonable (rational) sources: newspaper interviews, TV interviews, debates, etc.

**Stop watching “news” that is designed more for entertainment than information.** Network news is generally “safe.” Cable? Not so much. Turn off any TV or radio show that uses a self righteous tone of “I’m right and you are an imbecile!” Such disrespect should not be rewarded with viewer rating points. Proverbs 11:12 talks about the foolishness of quarrels.

**Do not forward any political email** unless you are willing to take the time to be sure what it says is true and not an “urban legend!” Do so by going to [www.Snopes.com](http://www.Snopes.com) website. Discernment is an important spiritual tool.

**Do engage in political conversations.** Don’t run from them. Listen well. Talk little. (Proverbs 10:14 & 19; 11:12). If you find yourself in a political conversation that is going nowhere – that the person you are speaking to really does not care to hear your thoughts and is angry – STOP! Politely excuse yourself or change the subject. Just as in Luke 9:5, Jesus told His disciples to “*leave the town where you’re not welcomed and shake the dust off your feet.*”

**Decide on issues and candidates for yourself.** Don’t take the easy way out and do whatever your political party or religious organization tells you to do. Think for yourself! Remember that you are a believer first, an American second and a distant third – a member of a political party. When some fellow believers said to us during the campaign that “you cannot be a Christian and a Democrat,” we were shocked and hurt! My goodness, what misguided thinking! Others said things like: “I’ve known you all your life and I know your character, but that “D” next to your name troubles me.” Do not desecrate people because of their political party affiliation.

Know what you believe and why you believe it and carry that thinking into the voting booth. This is the effective method Jesus used in religious arguments with the Pharisees.

# A CALL TO SERVICE

**Remember that differences are valuable.** It's what makes our country strong! Remind people about this when in a dialogue, particularly if the discussion gets heated. Say something like: "Well, it looks like we disagree on this. Isn't it great we have the freedom in this country to do that?"

**Take time to respond rather than react emotionally.** Tone it down! Talk tentatively, using "maybe" and "perhaps." You don't have to sound like a "know-it-all." Here is an example of one thought expressed in three different tones:

Too harsh: "We don't spend enough money on the poor in this country. The rich are selfish and greedy!"

Too soft: "I'm not sure and I could be wrong, but I think we may not spend enough money on welfare in this country."

Just right: "Many Americans believe, and I am one of them, that we need to be careful that our federal spending for the less fortunate is balanced with the other needs of our country."

Use conversation bridges like "here's another thought," or "what about this?" State what the other person has said and continue. For example "I understand that you think our welfare system is out of control. But still – what about the children?" Agree where you can and build on the idea. Pause occasionally and ask the other person what they think.

**Avoid speaking in Christian jargon.** Our three-year-old grand niece overheard an older child in her Sunday school class saying that "Jesus had come in to his heart." Not wanting to be left out, she replied, "He came into my heart too but couldn't stay – He had to go back to God."

**Test for understanding.** Paraphrase. "Let's see if I understand you correctly – you think that (state your understanding of their position). Is that right?" Be sincere. Be curious. Be patient. Understanding someone else's point of view does not mean agreeing with it. Respect the opinions of others.



**Listen.** Don't be thinking of what you will say next. This is not debate class.

The word listen is derived from two Anglo-Saxon words. One word is hlystan, which means "hearing." The other is hlosnian, which means "to wait in suspense." Listening, then, is a combination of hearing what the other person says and a suspenseful waiting, an intense psychological involvement with the other.

Robert Bolton

## Course Conclusion

Let's end where we began – the Kingdom of God. In Matthew, chapter 13, Jesus tells the parable of the sower. Jesus is, of course, the sower. Some seeds fell along the path and were quickly devoured by birds. Other seeds fell on rocky ground and had no depth of soil so they scorched in the sun; other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth multitudes of grain. The places where the seeds fell represent the condition of the heart of those who heard the kingdom message.

The seeds that fell along the path said "no" to the message of God. The seeds that had no depth at first said "yes" to God's message but did not hold firm when trials came. The third group of seeds said "yes" but eventually chose the trappings of the culture over the offerings of the kingdom. What awaited those who did not trust, succumbed to trials, or preferred the world's trappings? Tragedy! Eternal separation from God. What awaited the fourth group who said "yes" to God's message, stayed true, and brought others into the kingdom? Treasures in heaven. It's your choice: tragedy or treasures.

**Being the Kingdom of God here on earth is the responsibility of every believer and it involves both the personal gospel and the service gospel. We are responsible to lovingly care for the least of these and to engage politely and effectively in the public arena. Will you accept the challenge?**



# A CALL TO SERVICE

**Application** – as a result of this session I will do the following...

With my life...

In my community...

Through my church...

May God guide you as you  
“make your faith matter.”



# Covenant to Serve

As a person of faith in CHRIST JESUS, SON of the LIVING GOD, I covenant to obey His Word in deed and in truth. I will:

- \_\_\_ BE COMPASSIONATELY ATTENTIVE to those with needs that cross my path;
- \_\_\_ SEEK WAYS to serve the “least of these” who cross my path;
- \_\_\_ PRAY for those who serve the “least of these” wherever and whoever they are;
- \_\_\_ SPEAK UP for those with no voice, particularly the oppressed, the stranger and those seeking justice;
- \_\_\_ BE DILIGENT about finding and investing time in structured ways to serve through my church, and in my community;
- \_\_\_ DEVELOP more discretionary funds so I can invest them in serving the “least of these;”
- \_\_\_ BOLDLY SHARE Christ’s message of hope and salvation through my actions and in words, when needed.

---

SIGNED ON THIS the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_,  
in the year of our LORD JESUS CHRIST \_\_\_\_\_.



# A CALL TO SERVICE



## Post-Test

Please pause now and take this “post-test.” Like before, it is private and your answers only will be used to get a reading for the group’s position on the questions. Use the extra page to record your answers and turn in to the facilitator.

1. Today’s “church” emphasizes the command to serve others as much as it does salvation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Agree					Disagree				

2. The Kingdom of God on earth means:

- a. Accepting Jesus by grace as my personal savior from the punishment of sins
- b. Living a radically altered lifestyle from the culture
- c. Serving others – both believers and non-believers
- d. All the above

3. I represent the Kingdom of God on earth.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never					Always				

4. Service to the “least of these” as Jesus spoke about in the Sermon on the Mount is:

- a. A suggestion
- b. A command
- c. A requirement for entry to Heaven

5. I tithe my time and talent for the “least of these”:

- a. Hardly ever
- b. One hour a week
- c. Four hours a week

# A CALL TO SERVICE

6. My attitude when I see a homeless person, standing on a corner, with a sign begging for money is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
But for the grace of God go I.								Lazy bum, get a job!	

7. I believe that the Biblical agenda for social justice includes only abortion, prayer in school, and heterosexual marriage issues.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Agree								Disagree	

8. To what degree do you agree/disagree with this statement, "Once I've made a profession of faith, it doesn't matter how I live—if I serve others or not".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Agree								Disagree	

9. To what degree do you agree/disagree with this statement regarding illegal immigrants in the USA, "I think we should build a 10-foot border wall and shoot anyone who climbs over it."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Agree								Disagree	

10. To what degree do you agree/disagree with this statement, "You can't be a Christian and a Democrat."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Agree								Disagree	

11. How well do you think the church is fulfilling the command to serve the "least of these"?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very well								Not very well	

12. "Lifestyle evangelism" is more important than "lifestyle service."

True

False

Don't Know

# SOLUTIONS vs. SHOUTING MATCHES



13. Most Christians live to please other people more than they live to please God.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
 Agree Disagree

14. I am aware of the status of the “least of these” in my community.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
 Completely aware Not at all

15. American values and Godly values share this common thread; we have a shared responsibility to each other.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
 Agree Disagree

16. The budget of the USA should be a moral document, reflecting how Americans care for the poor and oppressed.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
 Agree Disagree

17. Taking care of the poor and oppressed is the job of government—not churches or believers.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
 Agree Disagree

18. Taking care of the poor and oppressed is the job of believers, not government.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
 Agree Disagree

19. There is a difference between religious practice and public displays of religion.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
 Agree Disagree





## Post-Test Answer Key

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 13. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ 14. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ 15. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_ 16. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_ 17. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_ 18. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_ 19. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_ 20. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_ 21. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_ 22. \_\_\_\_\_

11. \_\_\_\_\_ 23. \_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_ 24. \_\_\_\_\_

25. \_\_\_\_\_





As a result of my reflection on what I've read, learned and discussed – I will strive to move from belief to action in each of the areas below:

With my life...

In my community...

Through my church...

May God guide you as you  
“make your faith matter.”



# A P P E N D I X

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1. Voter Meditation Card	165-166
2. Journal	167-168
3. Suggestions on Reading the Bible	169-170
4. How to Share Your Faith Story	171-172
5. Bibliography	173-174
6. The Making Faith Matter Initiative	175-176



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



**VOTER MEDITATION CARD**

Luke 4:17-21

<sup>17</sup> And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup> *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;”* <sup>19</sup> *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”*

<sup>20</sup> Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. <sup>21</sup> And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

What matters to  
**GOD, what REALLY**  
matters to **JESUS**

**HOMELESS**  
**ORPHANS WIDOWS**  
**OPPRESSED**  
**POOR NEEDY SICK**  
**BROKEN HEARTED**

**SHOULD MATTER TO US!**

**MAKING FAITH MATTER**

Who is My Neighbor?

Luke 10:29-37

<sup>29</sup> But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

<sup>30</sup> Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead.

<sup>31</sup> Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

<sup>32</sup> Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>5</sup> On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’ <sup>36</sup> So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”

<sup>37</sup> And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Cut along dotted line, then fold in half down, and in half across.



## What Really Pleases God

### Isaiah 58:6-10

<sup>6</sup> “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?”

<sup>7</sup> *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?*

<sup>8</sup> Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

<sup>9</sup> Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’

“If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, <sup>10</sup> *If you extend your soul to the hungry And satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday.*

### Micah 6:8

<sup>8</sup> He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

### 1 John 3:16-18

<sup>16</sup> By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. <sup>17</sup> But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

<sup>18</sup> My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

### Luke 25:33-40

<sup>33</sup> And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

<sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

<sup>40</sup> And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’





### **SUGGESTIONS ON READING THE BIBLE**

The Bible is an amazing story book! Central to the Bible's big story is God and His work with the world and humankind. We encourage reading the Bible in several different translations and paraphrases. Why? The Bible was originally written using 11,280 Hebrew, Aramaic (Jesus' everyday language) and Greek words. English translations typically use only around 6,000 words. And it was written over a period of at least 1,000 years. So you can see how easy it is to miss shades and nuances in the meaning.

For example – during the formative years of our country – the Bible was used to argue both for and against slavery! Although this seems hard to fathom now – the people of the 18th and 19th century believed they were rightly dividing the Word of God!

Reading a different translation than “what you were brought up on” will also bring a freshness to the Word. Often, we are so familiar with a text that it slides right off our tongue without having passed through our brain! Reading a different version will force you to slow down and reflect on what God is saying to you.

Using a Bible handbook or commentary helps as well in understanding the culture and society in which the Bible was written and how it differs from today. It is also important to know who is speaking (the author), who he is speaking to (the audience) and what he is trying to say (the message).

The Zondervan Handbook to the Bible suggests asking these three questions when reading the Bible: “What section of the Bible is it in? What did the passage mean to the original readers or hearers?

And how does the same message apply to us today? This will help you avoid picking a bit out of context – the Bible is not a magic box; building a doctrine on a verse which has been misunderstood; or saying it's too remote and difficult for ordinary people; it's not!”

With regard to the Bible's core message being attainable by ordinary people – here's a story that proves it. Years ago we kept a sweet Japanese high school girl in our home for two weeks over the Christmas holidays. The organization sponsoring the



# A CALL TO SERVICE

teenagers encouraged us to share our faith with the students – many were not believers. When we asked Takako if she had ever seen a Bible, she showed us hers! In Japanese, of course. Then she told us her amazing story. The school she attended in Japan used the Bible as the “textbook” for teaching English as a language. Though her family was Buddhist, she became a follower of Christ through studying her “English lessons.”

And lastly, while I believe the Bible is open to many interpretations on many topics, there are a few that I believe are non-debatable: the Holy Trinity, the sovereignty of God, Jesus as God’s only son, the virgin birth, and the death and resurrection of Jesus as redemption for humankind’s souls. (Are there others that you would include?). As a pastor friend of ours says, these beliefs are written in blood, other beliefs are written in ink, and some are written in pencil.

We encourage you to stand firm on the “blood” beliefs and be open to listening and learning on the others. This is what makes Bible study so dynamic!

### HOW TO SHARE YOUR FAITH STORY

There are so many different ways to share your faith story, and yet most believers feel uncomfortable doing so. We encourage you to make your story conversational, in plain English – listening for (and praying for) the right opportunity. Here is a sample that I use each week at the end of our worship service when visiting with people who are considering making a decision to follow Christ.

#### The Good News (set within the larger context of the Bible's larger story)

*God created a wonderful creation – the world and humankind. He loved Adam and Eve and enjoyed fellowship with them. He gave them the opportunity to choose between good and evil. When they chose evil by disobeying Him, sin entered the world. God mourned the fall of humanity and the barrier it put between Him and His creations. He is holy and cannot associate with unholy things.*

*The Bible tells us that the debt we must pay because of our sin and wrongdoing is death. God loves you so much that He provided a way for your sin debt, and mine, to be paid by someone else! He sent His only Son, Jesus, to earth to take the punishment for our sins and make the whole world right. Jesus died on the cross to carry out God's justice and His mercy. He sacrificed His life for you – as though you were the only person to ever live. Jesus, the crucified messiah, has been raised from the dead and the new creation is coming.*

*If you'd like to begin a personal relationship with Jesus today, please pray this prayer:*

*Lord Jesus, I invite You into my life. I admit that I have done wrong. I believe that You died for me and that Your blood pays the debt for my sins and gives me eternal life in heaven. By faith, I receive this amazing gift, and I trust you as my Lord and Savior. Thank you for making me a new creation! Amen.*

# A CALL TO SERVICE

Another approach that is useful when having day-to-day dialogue with someone is to ask, “How is your spiritual life?” Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a nudge when the time is right to ask this question conversationally. I think you will be surprised at how eager people are to talk about spiritual things. When the time is right, say something like, “God loves you and wants you to have a good life. Are you interested in hearing about it?” Then proceed with the Gospel.

Salvation happens in the moment, but conversion from our old life to our new life takes time (See Session 2). Even so, we do believe that it is important to plant the “service seed” right at the moment of salvation! I like to say something like this,

*Welcome to the family of God. I'm sure you are grateful for this amazing free gift God has given you. One way we can show our gratitude is by serving others daily. It actually is an expectation God holds for all His believers. It's His way of ushering in His Kingdom – we get to play a part. There are many opportunities for service –read the weekly bulletin for ideas.*

One more thought: God expects us to share our faith. He expects us to do it in a way that represents Him well . . . gently, lovingly, with discretion. He does not hold us accountable for the decision to accept or reject the Gospel for anyone but ourselves. We tell the story to others; they make the decision. (See the course conclusion at the end of Session 7).

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### THE MAKING FAITH MATTER INITIATIVE

The Making Faith Matter Initiative was founded by Charlie Stuart in 2009 as a way to encourage people of faith to live compassionately, helping the “least of these” through service and public square participation.

Based on biblical principles, the Making Faith Matter Initiative provides the local church with resources, systems and tools to help mobilize their members for service to the “least of these” in their communities and the world. Making Faith Matter is an interdenominational effort.

The **vision** of the Making Faith Matter Initiative is to strengthen the faith community, through the local church, so they can help more people than any other institution in America, by enabling individuals to lead lives that reflect “the kingdom of God here on earth.”

The **mission** of the Making Faith Matter Initiative is to encourage people of faith to live compassionately, helping the “least of these” through service and public participation.



The logo mark for the Making Faith Matter Initiative contains doves, two hands, and a heart. The muted colors indicate a humbleness of spirit and transparency of heart.

The dove illustrates spiritual faith and reminds us that God expects us to share His love in peace and dignity.

The hands indicate a helping hand reaching out to serve; and a receiving hand accepting help in dignity. The heart reminds us to have compassion.

The Making Faith Matter Initiative includes a multi-week course, delivered through the local church, that leads believers to accept the challenge of “lifestyle service.” It also includes a systematic way to connect participants to opportunities for service in the church, the community and internationally.

The Making Faith Matter Initiative provides ongoing support and encouragement to course participants and to the mission activities and ministries that are presented to



# A CALL TO SERVICE

course participants. A robust website hosts a resource center that all participants may use including effective ideas that other churches are doing.

In this way, the Making Faith Matter Initiative is more than a Bible Study; it is a process to engage church members in vital service to the “least of these” in our world. Additionally, the staff of Making Faith Matter is available to churches for consultation on the process of volunteer engagement.

In the future, the Making Faith Matter Initiative envisions convening conferences for all interested parties to attend to help further the cause of encouraging believers to live compassionately in the world.

The Making Faith Matter Initiative is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization.

To learn more about Making Faith Matter, visit our website or get in touch with Charlie Stuart, founder.

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# A CALL TO SERVICE



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## FACILITATOR'S GUIDE TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Introduction			1
<u>Session #</u>	<u>Approximate Length</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page #</u>
1a	(45 min)	Orientation	15
1b	(70 min)	Here & Now, There & Later	21
2	(90 min)	God's Performance System	29
3	(90 min)	God's Target Audience	35
4	(90 min)	The Master Example	41
5	(90 min)	Finding Your Service Sweet Spot	47
6	(90 min)	Participating in the Public Square	53
7	(90 min)	Solutions vs. Shouting Matches	59



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## INTRODUCTION

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With our lives. In our communities.  
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## Introduction

Dear Facilitator:

Thank you for your service to the Lord, shown through your willingness to facilitate this course! It is our prayer that God will bless you as you lead others in learning to serve the “least of these.” We believe He will – He said so in John 13:17, *“If you know these things (serving others) blessed are you if you do them.”* This Facilitator Guide provides many tools that we hope will be helpful as you prepare to lead this dynamic course, including:

- ❖ How to Prepare
- ❖ Learning Objectives for MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service
- ❖ General Session Overview
- ❖ Session by Session Facilitator Guide
- ❖ General Facilitation Guidelines
- ❖ Audience Assumptions
- ❖ Potential Obstacles to Change
- ❖ Principles of Adult Learning
- ❖ The Importance of Setting

(Don't worry – it's not as long as it sounds 😊).

If, during the course, you have questions or concerns, please contact Charlie Stuart at 407.230.2125 or [Charlie.Stuart@MakingFaithMatter.org](mailto:Charlie.Stuart@MakingFaithMatter.org).

## How to Prepare

It would be best to do all the homework, read all the teaching texts, and read the Appendix prior to starting the course. Realizing that this will take some time, we recommend that you at least scan the Appendix to become familiar with what is included, read the Orientation Session and Session One and complete the homework in those portions prior to the first class meeting. The earlier you read the teaching text each week, the better you will be able to use personal examples and illustrations as you facilitate

What does “facilitate” mean? Facilitation is different than teaching in that you guide the class and keep it “on task” while extrapolating “truths” from the teaching text and the class! In other words – you are not expected to be the expert. We like to take an



## A CALL TO SERVICE

egalitarian approach where we honor the “brilliance in the classroom” and learn from each other, not just from the leader.

After all, the One with all the truth is the Author of the Bible – not us. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you lead the discussions. This course is written so that anyone who has an interest in the topic can be an effective course facilitator... you do not need to be a trained educator! We will include some basic facilitation skills later on.

Denominational Filters: If there is something in the text that does not align with your denomination’s beliefs or teachings, point that out in class – not from a “wrong/right” point of view but from a “what do you think?” point of view. One of the goals of this course is to help believers rise above “denominational divides.”

Start and end each session with prayer: You can lead this in the first couple sessions, and then ask for a volunteer in the future for the opening prayer.

At the start of each session ask:

How did it go this week with your “application?”

Materials lists: White board, chalk board or flip chart and markers; nametags (session one & two); workbooks; extra Bible’s for use during the session; DVD player & the MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service DVD, Facilitators’ Guide, extra pens, CDs & CD player (if desired).

Sharing your Faith Story: Read in the Appendix about this. Be prepared to share your story with any who are “seeking” to know more about following Christ.

Central theme Bible verse: 1 John 3:18 – Lead them in saying this together each week at the start of the class. *“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with action and truth.”*

Most of the Bible references are from the NKJV. Read in the Appendix about the value in reading various translations and paraphrases.



## Introduction

Nomenclature: When we refer to “believers,” we mean followers of Christ. When we say “seekers,” we mean people who are seeking to know Christ. When we say “the church,” we are referring to the universal church, not any particular denomination.

Please, contact us during the course with your questions. You are an important part of the “design team” – we believe in continuous process improvement.

Sincerely,

*Charlie & Barbara Stuart*



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Learning Objectives

#### Overarching Theme

How to be “the Kingdom of God here on earth” and live out the service compassion principles of the Bible in our daily lives. A change of thinking will lead to a new way of being in the world. In the seven sessions, participants will be encouraged:

#### Session One

- ❖ To discover for themselves that the meaning of “being the Kingdom of God on earth” includes both a salvation experience and service to others.
- ❖ To discern that the post-modern church has underemphasized the important role of service to others.
- ❖ To realize that a focus on service is as important as a focus on salvation.
- ❖ To realize that service to the “least of these” is an obligation & a responsibility...a love offering in gratitude for all God has done for us.

#### Session Two

- ❖ To see the rewards of service...joy, satisfaction, eternal rewards, the world heals, etc.
- ❖ To realize the consequences of disobedience in not serving the least of these.
- ❖ To recognize the importance of the compassion principles in a believer’s life.

#### Session Three

- ❖ To broaden their understanding of the biblical social justice agenda beyond MAP (marriage, abortion and prayer in school) to include the compassion principles.
- ❖ To identify the biblical compassion principles...serving the “least of these”:
  - ◆ Poor
  - ◆ Widows
  - ◆ Orphans
  - ◆ Needy
  - ◆ Oppressed
  - ◆ Sick
  - ◆ Broken Hearted



## Introduction

### Session Four

- ❖ To explore service attitudes (how we are to serve...humbly, with our time, checkbook, etc.).
- ❖ To practice lifestyle service – daily, spontaneous as God presents opportunities and corporately through the church ministries or community organizations.
- ❖ To discover that lifestyle service provides many opportunities for lifestyle evangelism.

### Session Five

- ❖ To assess their own stewardship of time and to make a decision to commit to “lifestyle service”.
- ❖ To discover their passion areas for service.
- ❖ To select a “least of these” service area(s) that aligns with their passion, skill and experience.

### Session Six

- ❖ To compare and contrast American values and faith values...to see that a common thread is that we have a shared responsibility to each other.
- ❖ To think about the impact that could be made if all believers accepted their service responsibility, particularly as it relates to public policy and the federal budget...to see it as a moral document.
- ❖ To recognize that the faith communities cannot do “it” alone (take care of the oppressed and poor); to recognize that there is a role for compassionate public policy.
- ❖ To understand their civic responsibility (vote, be informed, pray for, etc).
- ❖ To understand the appropriate interplay of church and state.
- ❖ To understand the separation of church and state in America, and to understand the difference between religious practice and public displays of religion.



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Session Seven

- ❖ To know how to talk civilly about social policy issues in a way that reflects their faith...how to disagree well.
- ❖ To think for themselves regarding values and definitions...to explore what the Bible says to them.

### **Traditional Facilitation Guidelines**

Start and end on time.

The Law of Sensory Appeals – people learn better when we appeal to all their senses. They remember:

- ❖ 10% of what they hear
- ❖ 30% of what they see
- ❖ 20% of what they read
- ❖ 70% of what they do

Control the dialogue – some people use more “air time” than others. Handle this by saying, “let’s hear from someone else on this question.”

Be aware of your time – and use “the accordion.” Expand when you need to and contract when you need to – just like playing an accordion – pull it wide (expand) and push it narrow (contract). **Make sure you review and know the central learning point for each session.** This will help you as you “accordion.”

Honor the brilliance in the room by accepting answers given by participants – unless they are WAY off base. If someone’s comment is misguided say, “That’s an interesting thought. What do some of the others think?”

For continuity, it is important to “review/preview” each session. “Review” consists of repeating the main learning point at the end of the current session and “preview” showcases in one sentence the topic of the next session. We also review at the beginning of each new session in order to “connect” the previous session’s learning to the learning that will occur in the current session.



## Introduction

Try to keep your “air time” to a minimum. Remember, for this course, you are a facilitator, not a teacher.

Build community among the participants by introducing them to each other, asking how you can pray for them, etc.

We must model what we hope to achieve – thoughtful, reasonable, dialogue. Active listening. Our tone should be gentle persuasion, not dogmatic. People change for their own reasons, not due to force or guilt.

Ask the questions, silently count to 60 and someone will surely pitch in and answer!

Try to hear from everyone every session. You can do this by saying “Let’s start with so-and-so on this question and then go around the room with each new question.” Be sure to ask if there are other comments or questions on each discussion point.

## Know Your Audience

This course has been written with the “believer” in mind – those who follow Jesus Christ. There may be some participants who are “seekers” – people who have not yet made a decision to follow Christ. The course is open to both! Our assumptions when writing this course were that the course participants would be:

- ❖ 40 and younger
- ❖ Men and women
- ❖ Believers with a heart for service
- ❖ Spiritually mature, and wanting their faith to have more substance
- ❖ Curious (and confused?) about the relationship between faith and public service

This may or may not be who “shows up” for the course. Two items in the first session will help you know your audience: you will ask them to say why they are taking the course, and there will be an attitudinal “pre-test.”



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Potential Obstacles to Change

All learning programs are designed to enable change. In thinking about the design for MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service, we listed several potential obstacles to change. It will help your facilitation if you are aware of these potential barriers.

- ❖ Inertia, indifference.
- ❖ Too busy
- ❖ Thinking that this initiative promotes a service lifestyle at the sake of evangelism lifestyle. It's not either/or. It's both/and.
- ❖ "Smells" too political. Although MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service does deal with the appropriate interplay of faith and politics, it does not promote any party, ideology or candidate.
- ❖ The challenge of balancing service work "inside" the church vs. "outside" the church. As our pastor says: "The church has left the building!" This is a call for both types of service.

### Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes

Most learning programs deal with these three areas and this is true for MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service. This course focuses more heavily on attitudes that hopefully will lead to actions. It is our prayer that participants will be transformed to a new way of thinking that will lead to a new way of being in the world. But change takes time!

In the world of cultural competency training, David Hoopes is a leader. He developed a model called the "Hoopes Path of Intercultural Learning" that involves a series of steps most people take when changing their thinking about people from a different culture. I believe it serves as a good model also for learning about people with different ideologies or theologies. The steps are: paradigm centricity, awareness, understanding, respect, valuing, and finally, selective adoption.

- ❖ Paradigm centricity refers to seeing only our own paradigm through narrow filters and resisting or discarding others.



## Introduction

- ❖ Awareness is the point when we begin to realize that there are things that are outside our paradigms.
- ❖ Understanding is the point when we are not only aware of things outside our paradigm but we see their reason for existence.
- ❖ Respect is when we begin allowing for others to just be who they are – knowing that it is okay for things to not always fit into our paradigms.
- ❖ Valuing begins when we see the worth in the things that fall outside of our paradigm.
- ❖ Selective Adoption is the point at which we begin using things that were originally outside our own paradigms.

Participants will bring to the class all kinds of “paradigm centrality.” As we study and learn (and change?) together – let’s be sure we do it through the filter of God’s revelation to us.

## How Adults Learn

While I was a seminar designer/presenter for the Walt Disney World Company in the 1980’s, I was fortunate enough to be mentored by an excellent educational curriculum developer. Some of the many things she taught me were the principles of adult learning. The paper, “Principles of Adult Learning,” by Dr. George H. Litowin, outlines the following principles:

1. When learners believe they can, will or should change, learning is more likely to lead to measurable behavioral change. When goals or expectations are set for adults by sources they respect, they are more likely to believe they can and should change. *Let’s encourage all course participants to believe that change is possible because the source of the expectations is Jesus. The question, “should they change” will be up to them.*
2. Learning is more likely to improve performance when the learning experience is based upon skills and practices that are known to lead to high performances. *We will study the best “best practices” – those of Jesus.*



## A CALL TO SERVICE

3. Learning is more likely to occur when there is unfreezing of prior attitudes, thoughts and behavior patterns. *Participants will have ample opportunity to do this through class discussions, inventories, pre- and post-test, etc.*
4. Learning will be enhanced if learners can observe and study examples of the desired behavior. *This course will study the best example: Jesus! Additionally, participants will be asked to visualize others who model the desired behavior.*
5. When learners identify, describe and discuss the desired behavior in relation to their “set” (their reality, time, place, space, family, job,) learning is more likely to lead to change. If they do not perceive the training as being relevant to their reality, they will reject it. *In MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service, there are obstacles to change – very busy schedules being one of them. Sessions 3 and 4 deal with this.*
6. The learning experience is more likely to influence behavior when learners perceive that the desired behavior is consistent with their ideal self-image. *This one is a little tricky – it depends upon how a person forms their ideal self-image – from a worldly or Godly point of view.*
7. The more frequently individuals practice the desired behavior, the more likely it is that new behavior patterns will be demonstrated. *Practice makes perfect! This is why we ask the course participants to name one thing they will do or think about each week as an application from the session. We want them to “try on” new service behaviors – a little at a time.*
8. When learners get feedback on how well they are doing, learning is more likely to lead to behavioral change. *This is why we encourage you to ask at the start of each session (Sessions #2 thru 7), “How did it go this week?” Encourage their efforts as well as their accomplishments – no matter how small.*
9. Learning will be more effective in changing behavior when learners set concrete goals and develop written action plans as part of the learning process. *Again, this is why we ask them to write down their action plan for the week. Also – we ask them to sign a covenant to serve (if they choose) in Session 7.*
10. The learning experience will be enhanced if all parts of the whole person – cognitive, affective, and behavioral – are activated and integrated. *This course has*



## Introduction

*cognitive work (reading and studying the Bible, looking at facts); affective work (expressing their feelings and emotions); and behavioral work (“trying on” new ways of acting).*

11. Learning is more likely to lead to behavioral change when the physical-social environment encourages and supports the emergence of new behavior patterns. *Basically – this speaks to the importance of setting – the learning environment. Participants need to feel emotionally and physically comfortable and safe.*
12. The creation of an on-the-job support system maximizes the application of new learning and behavior change. *The Making Faith Matter Initiative offers a “virtual support system” for participants by following up with them after the course concludes via email encouragements.*

## The Importance of Setting

You can create an effective learning environment by doing these things:

- ❖ Arrive 15 minutes early to be sure the room set-up is appropriate. The best set-up for this type of course is chairs circled in the round or a horse shoe set up with tables.
- ❖ Provide light refreshments if you wish (not necessary).
- ❖ Stand near the door and welcome participants as they arrive.
- ❖ Create community by showing interest in them and by introducing them to each other.
- ❖ Have all your materials and props at hand so you can focus on the people.
- ❖ Make sure the lighting and room temperature are adequate.
- ❖ We enjoy using music to set the environment while participants are arriving. For example – The Babbie Mason CD, “My Best So Far” has many songs that “fit” this course.
- ❖ Begin the class no later than 5 minutes past the appointed time – regardless of how many people have arrived.
- ❖ Set the standard of excellence.



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Session Overviews

The typical process will be this: Course participants complete the workbook homework for each session (this should take approximately one hour) and then read the teaching text for that session.

Then, in class, the facilitator will: guide the class through sharing the answers to some (not all) of the questions; lead a discussion on any topics that emerge from the session study; and guide the class to the central learning point of that session (See Learning Objectives at the beginning of each session's facilitators' guide). This will be the process for Sessions 2-7.

Session 1 will be different in that the course participants will not have received the workbook in advance and therefore will not have had a chance to complete the homework. There will be much to cover in Session 1 – not only the “orientation” but also the foundation for the whole course. Therefore, the Facilitator Guide for this session is more detailed and specific than the others.

There is a pre- and post-“test” in Session 1 and Session 7, respectively, to ascertain if the course has led anyone to change their thinking or doing.

Timing: Ideally, the “in-class” time would be 90 minutes. As you can imagine, this can vary considerably based upon the size of the group, the level of dialogue, etc. Because of this – it will be very important for you to know the **central learning points** in each session so that if you need to “contract” the session and skip some parts, at least the main points will have been made.

Workbook Fees: The workbooks are available at Making Faith Matter's website, just click on the “resources” page. There is a bulk price for 10 or more workbooks ordered at one time.

## S e s s i o n 1

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### **ORIENTATION**



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 1 Orientation



### Learning Objectives:

This session will encourage participants:

- ❖ To discover for themselves that the meaning of “being the Kingdom of God on earth” includes both a salvation experience and service to others.
- ❖ To discern that the post-modern church has underemphasized the important role of service to others.
- ❖ To realize that a focus on service is as important as a focus on salvation.
- ❖ To realize that service to the “least of these” is an obligation & a responsibility...a love offering in gratitude for all God has done for us.

### Timing

- ❖ This session has time guidelines that add-up to 115 minutes. Adjust as needed.

### Greeting

Do: Meet and greet each participant as they enter and give them a workbook. Use name tags during the first couple of sessions.

Do: Introduce each person to the others as they enter.

### Welcome

 Say: *Welcome to Making Faith Matter - an initiative to encourage people of faith to become the Kingdom of God here on earth by taking actions that matter. Let's begin with prayer.*

Do: Lead a short pray.



10 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Ascertain Interest in the Course

**Do:** If the group size is 10 or less – go around the circle and have each person give their name, one interesting thing about themselves, and why they are taking the course.

If the group is 11 or larger – ask the group to introduce themselves to the person on their right and left – finding out their name and why they decided to take this course. Then ask for 2 or 3 to share with the groups why they are taking the class.

**Do:** If a flip chart or white board is available – chart the responses. Comment on the answers, particularly the topics that the study will illuminate.

**Do:** Mention that the workbook will be necessary for the course, the price, and that they may pay at the end of the session.



10 Minutes

### Read, Reflect, Reveal & Record

 **Say:** *As we study the Bible and explore for ourselves what God has to say to us, we will use a Read, Reflect, Reveal, & Record method.*

**Do:** Talk them through this section in the hand out.

 **Say:** *So, let's practice! The theme Bible verse for the study is found in 1 John 3:18, "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with action and truth." Let's say it out loud together...*

*Please take a couple of minutes now to reflect on this verse then write what this verse says to you.*

**Do:** Ask a couple participants to share their responses.



10 Minutes

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 1 Orientation



### Review Course Agreements

Do: Briefly review the Course Agreements on page 4 of your ACTS workbook. Orient them to the workbook and Appendix, particularly the "journal" pages.

Do: Put your name, telephone number and email on the board. Ask them to call you if they will not be able to attend.

Do: Pass around the attendance sheet.

Do: Play the Introduction DVD (Founder Charlie Stuart speaks about the Making Faith Matter Initiative, and gives a brief overview of each of the seven weeks' topics. He "sets-up" the "pre-test.").

Do: Administer the "pre-test" (in the ACTS workbook pages 5-9).

 Say: *Did you find any of the questions interesting? Were any of them hard to answer? Did any of the questions make you stop and think about your service attitude?*



15 Minutes



## S e s s i o n 1

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### **HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER**

Becoming the Kingdom of God on Earth



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 1 HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER



Do: Ask one person to read aloud Matthew 6: 9-15.

 Say: For today's study, we will focus on two key phrases from the Lord's model prayer: "Thy Kingdom come" and "Thy will be done on earth." Although these are short phrases – they are long on meaning.

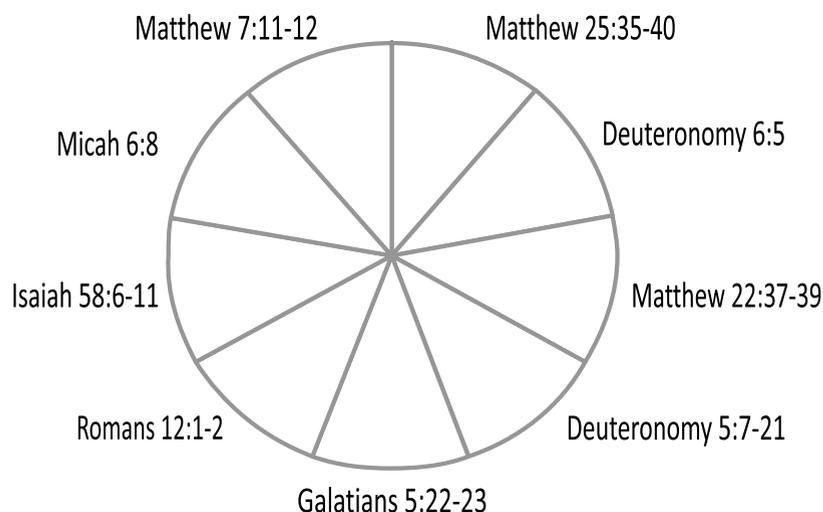
 Say: This session will flow very differently from the other 6. From here on we will come to class already having done our homework, read the teaching text, and reflected on what God is saying to us. For today, we will spend the next 25 minutes and read pages 11-22 and answer the questions. Please turn to page 17. Halfway down the page is a "Read & Reflect" section. Rather than reading all of these well known passages, please just pick 3 to read - your choice. We will come back together and discuss what we read, answered and think about the Kingdom of God here on earth. What questions do you have?



30 Minutes

Do: As they are reading – draw a large circle (see next page) on the board with 9 relatively equal "pie slices;" put one passage "address" in each pie sector.

Do: After 25 minutes reconvene the groups.





## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Thy Kingdom Come

Do: Hear from as many as possible. Remind them that what they think God is saying to them is what is most important.

-  Say: (1) What do you think is the Kingdom of God on earth?
- (2) The text states that there are two equally important parts of the Kingdom of God - salvation and service. What do you think?
- (3) Which of these (salvation, service) do you think the post-modern church emphasizes most?
- (4) How well do you think the church is fulfilling the command to serve? Why?

### Thy Will Be Done

 Say: Now, let's look at that second phrase from the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done on earth..." You read several passages listed on page 17. Each passage revealed a "will of God." Someone please read (then mention each passage).

Do: After they have read each passage, put the descriptive phrase in the sector (see next page), and for each say:

 Say: If we do (the phrase, ex: the Golden Rule) we are doing the will of God.

Note: The Deuteronomy 5:7-21 passage is long, so for this one just say:

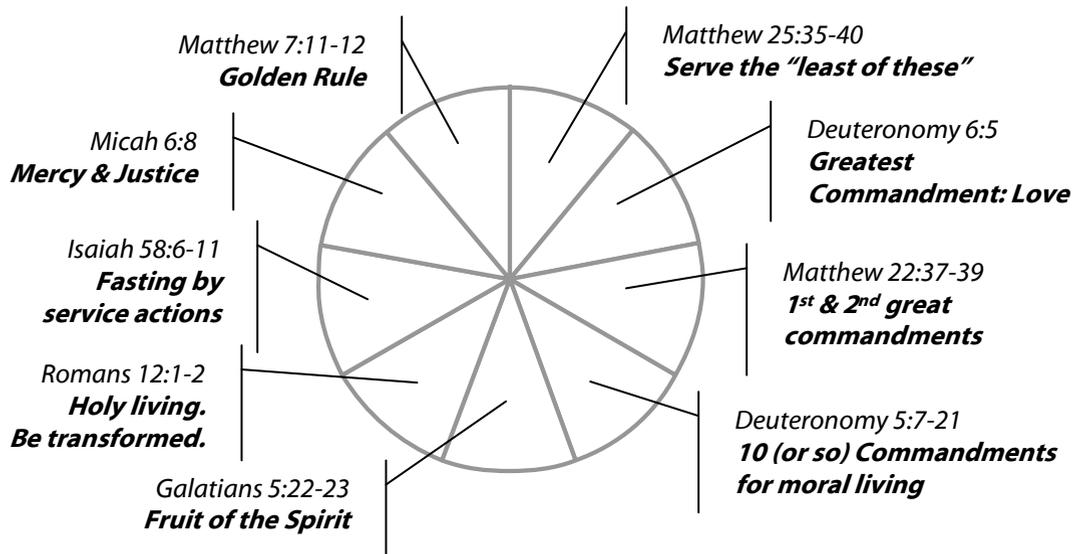
 Say: Who read Deuteronomy 5:7-21? What is this passage commonly called? (The 10 Commandments)



30 Minutes

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 1 HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER



**Say:** Yes. It means all these things. Basically, the direction for how we are to conduct our lives as Christians is both vertical - love, worship and serve Him, and horizontal - we are to love and serve others.

**Do:** Pointing to the pie chart...

**Say:** All of these are important. The Making Faith Matter content will not take up all these principles - but will focus instead on God's will regarding the "least of these"...the poor and oppressed.

These things are certainly on God's heart - there are more than 2,100 verses in the Bible that refer to poverty and justice! In Session Three, we will look in detail at who the "least of these" are in today's modern society,.

We find these people both inside the church (fellow believers) and outside the church (seekers). For purposes of this course, we will call service inside the church "ministry" and outside the church "missions."



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Transition

 Say: Now let's turn to page 18 in your workbook. If you were to ask people on the street "how would you describe a Christian - what they do and say...what do you think you would hear them say?"

Do: Be ready for answers ranging from "they think Christians are hypocrites, that Christians say one thing but do another, that Christians are judgmental and narrow minded, etc." to "most people think Christians are a little weird but nice."

 Say: Do you think there is a gap between how we hope Christians are seen by the world and how they are actually seen? Describe it.

Do: Point out that many good things are being done by the church today and yet...there is great opportunity to do more.

 Say: What do you think is largely responsible for this gap?

Do: Some answers you may hear:

- We haven't been taught this.
- We haven't seen it modeled by church leaders.
- Our nature is to be selfish. We live in a self-centered society.
- We seek man's approval more than God's.
- The culture wars (marriage, abortion, prayer in schools) have presented Christians as judgmental rather than loving.

 Say: What conclusions can be drawn from this? For the universal church? For you personally?

 Say: Let's hear from a couple of you...as a result of this session, what will you do or think?

Do: Conclude by doing a review and preview.

Do: Play the conclusion DVD (Barbara Stuart).

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 1 HERE & NOW, THEN & LATER



### Summary

 Say: Today, we discovered that we are to usher in the “there and then” (heaven) during the “here and now.” We are the Kingdom of God here on earth, and if we don’t do our part, then that part of God’s Kingdom is missing.

We know that God expects us to usher in the Kingdom of God here on earth by doing His will. And we know that His will includes serving the poor and oppressed.

And we know that the “church” has opportunity for improvement in lifestyle service. And maybe we do, too?

### Preview

 Say: Each session has homework to be completed before reading the teaching text. There are questions for you to ask your friends, family and co-workers, too.

Session Two’s homework will take you into the topic of the rewards of service and the possible retributions of disobedience as it relates to serving others.

### Conclusion

 Say: If you have not experienced a personal conversion, I would be happy to talk with you privately about that, after class or during the week. It is our hope that you will experience a “service conversion” during this course if you haven’t already done so.



10 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

✝ Pray: May the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts and the actions of our hands and feet be acceptable in Thy sight, oh Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Grant us discernment in knowing and doing your will. Help us read your word with heart and mind. Reveal to us what we are doing right and what we might need to do differently. Open our eyes Lord to the needs of those around us. Amen.

📢 Say: If you have not paid for your workbook, please do so after class.

May God guide you this week as you “make your faith matter.”

This session is concluded.

## S e s s i o n 2

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### **GOD'S "PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM"**

Choices Have Consequences



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 2

## GOD'S "PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM"



### Learning Objectives:

This session will encourage participants:

- ❖ To see the rewards of service...joy, satisfaction, eternal rewards, the world heals, etc.
- ❖ To realize the consequences of disobedience in not serving the least of these.
- ❖ To recognize the importance of the compassion principles in a believer's life.

### Welcome

 Say: Welcome to Making Faith Matter - let's begin by saying the theme verse together, "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth." (1 John 3:18)

 Say: The book of 1<sup>st</sup> John was written by the apostle John about 50 or 60 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In saying "dear children" - John is talking in a loving, fatherly fashion to fellow believers. He encourages them to live as children of God - loving one another.

Do: Lead a short pray.



10 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Review

 Say: How did it go this week with your application?

Do: Hear from 2-3 people.

 Say: Remember the key learning objectives from last session:

- ❖ We discovered that the meaning of “being the Kingdom of God on earth” includes both a salvation experience and service to others.
- ❖ We learned that the post-modern church has underemphasized the important role of service to others.
- ❖ We realized that a focus on service is as important as a focus on salvation.
- ❖ And we also realized that service to the “least of these” is an obligation & a responsibility...a love offering in gratitude for all God has done for us.



15 Minutes

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 2 GOD'S "PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM"



### Overview

 Say: The main topic for today's class is - The rewards and benefits of serving and the possible retributions for not living a life of service.

Do: Show DVD intro.

 Say: Let's share your answers to the homework.

Do: Go through as many questions as time allows.

### What may come up in this session:

- ❖ Controversy around heavenly rewards and crowns
- ❖ Debate around grace-only vs. grace-plus-works as the path to salvation



55 Minutes

### Summary

 Say: Today, we discovered that there are rewards of service as well as consequences for disobedience in not serving the least of these. Exhibiting compassion principles is an important part of a believer's life.



10 Minutes

### Preview

 Say: Session Three's homework will take you into the topic of identifying the "least of these" in our church and community.



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Conclusion

✚ Pray: *May the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts and the actions of our hands and feet be acceptable in Thy sight, oh Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Grant us discernment in knowing and doing your will. Help us read your word with heart and mind. Reveal to us what we are doing right and what we might need to do differently. Open our eyes Lord to the needs of those around us. Amen.*

📢 Say: *May God guide you this week as you “make your faith matter.”*

*This session is concluded.*

## S e s s i o n 3

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### **GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE**

Identifying the "Least of These"



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 3 GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE



### Preparation

Please obtain from your pastoral staff a copy of the ministries and mission activities offered through your church, and make enough copies for each participant. Also – if possible, obtain information about the size of the “least of these” populations in your community. For example: how many homeless are there? How many single moms? How many people with AIDs, etc. The local United Way, county office, or YMCA may be good resources.

### Learning Objectives:

This session will encourage participants:

- ❖ To broaden their understanding of the biblical social justice agenda beyond MAP (marriage, abortion and prayer in school) to include the compassion principles.
- ❖ To identify the biblical compassion principles...serving the “least of these.”

### Welcome

 Say: *Welcome to Making Faith Matter - let's begin by saying the theme verse together, “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth.” (1 John 3:18)*

Do: Lead a short pray.



5 Minutes

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Review

 Say: How did it go this week with your application?

Do: Hear from 2-3 people.

 Say: Remember the key learning objectives from last session:

- ❖ That there are rewards of service, and
- ❖ There are consequences for disobedience in not serving the least of these, because
- ❖ Compassion principles should play an important part in a believer's life.



15 Minutes

### Overview

 Say: The main topic for today's class is - Identifying the "least of these" in Bible days, and today.

Do: Show DVD intro.

 Say: Let's share your answers to the homework.

Do: Go through as many questions as time allows.

What may come up in this session:

- ❖ Who are "strangers" in modern America? Muslims? Homosexuals? Undocumented aliens?

Do: After completing the homework questions, handout the flier/brochure that lists the ministries and missions of your church.



60 Minutes

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 3 GOD'S TARGET AUDIENCE



 Say: Which of these opportunities address the needs of the “least of these” as discussed in this session. Remember, that although “choir” (for example) may not be a direct link to the “least of these” - there are most likely members in the choir who are needy, brokenhearted, etc., who need compassionate care.

### Summary

 Say: Today, we discussed broadening our understanding of the biblical social justice agenda beyond MAP (marriage, abortion and prayer in school) to include the compassion principles. We also defined today’s “least of these” as including the poor, widows, orphans, needy, oppressed, sick and broken hearted. And we received and discussed the avenues of service to these offered through our church.

### Preview

 Say: Session Four’s homework will take you into the topic of how we are to serve those in need.



10 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Conclusion

✝ Pray: May the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts and the actions of our hands and feet be acceptable in Thy sight, oh Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Grant us discernment in knowing and doing your will. Help us read your word with heart and mind. Reveal to us what we are doing right and what we might need to do differently. Open our eyes Lord to the needs of those around us. Amen.

📣 Say: May God guide you this week as you “make your faith matter.”

This session is concluded.

## S e s s i o n 4

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### **THE MASTER EXAMPLE**

How We Are to Serve



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



## Session 4 THE MASTER EXAMPLE



### Learning Objectives:

This session will encourage participants:

- ❖ To explore service attitudes (how we are to serve...humbly, with our time, checkbook, etc.).
- ❖ To practice lifestyle service – daily, spontaneous as God presents opportunities and corporately through the church ministries or community organizations.
- ❖ To discover that lifestyle service provides many opportunities for lifestyle evangelism.

### Welcome

 Say: *Welcome to Making Faith Matter - let's begin by saying the theme verse together, "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth." (1 John 3:18)*

Do: Lead a short pray.



5 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Review

 Say: How did it go this week with your application?

Do: Hear from 2-3 people.

 Say: Remember the key learning objectives from last session:

- ❖ We must broaden our understanding of the biblical social justice agenda beyond MAP (marriage, abortion and prayer in school) to include the compassion principles...serving the needy, broken hearted, poor, etc.
- ❖ We updated the definition of the "least of these" and reviewed what our church offers for serving them.



15 Minutes

### Overview

 Say: The main topic for today's class is - how we are to serve: humbly and generously; in big ways and small ways; spontaneously and structured.

Do: Show DVD intro.

 Say: Let's share your answers to the homework.

Do: Go through as many questions as time allows.

#### What may come up in this session:

- ❖ Are there undeserving poor?
- ❖ Socialism vs. capitalism and what does the Bible say about each.



60 Minutes

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 4 THE MASTER EXAMPLE



### Summary

 Say: Today, we talked about being humble in our service and using what we have that we control—our time and our checkbook—while we practice daily, spontaneous lifestyle service as well as through church ministries or community organizations. We realized that lifestyle service provides many opportunities for lifestyle evangelism.

### Preview

 Say: Session Five's homework will take you into the topic of finding your service passion area and then matching your passion to serve with service opportunities through our church and in the community. Take note: a part of the homework includes keeping a time log each day for one week. Start tomorrow morning.



10 Minutes





## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Conclusion

✝ Pray: May the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts and the actions of our hands and feet be acceptable in Thy sight, oh Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Grant us discernment in knowing and doing your will. Help us read your word with heart and mind. Reveal to us what we are doing right and what we might need to do differently. Open our eyes Lord to the needs of those around us. Amen.

📣 Say: May God guide you this week as you “make your faith matter.”

*This session is concluded.*

## S e s s i o n 5

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### **FINDING YOUR SERVICE SWEET SPOT**

Matching Passion with Opportunity



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 5 FINDING YOUR SERVICE SWEET SPOT



### Preparation

Make copies of the Opportunities for Service flier (catalogs of “least of these” service opportunities by church, community and world).

### Learning Objectives:

This session will encourage participants:

- ❖ To assess their own stewardship of time and to make a decision to commit to “lifestyle service”.
- ❖ To discover their passion areas for service.
- ❖ To select a “least of these” service area(s) that aligns with their passion, skill and experience.

### Welcome

 Say: *Welcome to Making Faith Matter - let's begin by saying the theme verse together, “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth.” (1 John 3:18)*

Do: Lead a short pray.



5 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Review

 Say: How did it go this week with your application? What did you learn from your time log?

Do: Hear from 2-3 people.

 Say: Remember the key learning objectives from last session:

- ❖ We explored “how we are to serve”—humbly—and with what we control—our time and checkbook.
- ❖ That to practice lifestyle service we have two opportunities—daily, spontaneous, as God presents; and corporately through church ministries or community organizations.
- ❖ We realized that lifestyle service provides many opportunities for lifestyle evangelism.



15 Minutes

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 5 FINDING YOUR SERVICE SWEET SPOT



### Overview

 Say: *The main topic for today's class is - discovering our service sweet spot, and opportunities for service that match our interests.*

Do: Show DVD intro.

 Say: *Let's share your answers to the homework.*

Do: Go through as many questions as time allows.

### What may come up in this session:

- ❖ I want to serve but can't find the time.
- ❖ Don't have the money.
- ❖ Too stressed at home & work.
- ❖ I already do enough.

 Say: *Before the end of the course, you will receive from the Making Faith Matter Initiative a list of service organizations that align with your service passion.*



60 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Summary

 Say: Today, perhaps, was the most important session. We looked at our stewardship of time and were asked to make a decision to commit to “lifestyle service”. We also discovered our passion areas for service and selected “least of these” service area(s) that align with our passion, skill and experience to explore for direct service.

### Preview

 Say: Session Six's homework will take you into the topic of representing the “least of these” in the public square as faithful citizens.

### Conclusion

 Pray: May the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts and the actions of our hands and feet be acceptable in Thy sight, oh Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Grant us discernment in knowing and doing your will. Help us read your word with heart and mind. Reveal to us what we are doing right and what we might need to do differently. Open our eyes Lord to the needs of those around us. Amen.

 Say: May God guide you this week as you “make your faith matter.”

This session is concluded.



10 Minutes

## S e s s i o n 6

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### **PARTICIPATING IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE**

Serving by Being the Voice of the Voiceless



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 6 PARTICIPATING IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE



### Learning Objectives:

This session will encourage participants:

- ❖ To compare and contrast American values and faith values...to see that a common thread is that we have a shared responsibility to each other.
- ❖ To think about the impact that could be made if all believers accepted their service responsibility, particularly as it relates to public policy and the federal budget...to see it as a moral document.
- ❖ To recognize that the faith communities can not do "it" alone (take care of the oppressed and poor); to recognize that there is a role for compassionate public policy.
- ❖ To understand their civic responsibility (vote, be informed, pray for, etc).
- ❖ To understand the appropriate interplay of church and state.
- ❖ To understand the separation of church and state in America, and to understand the difference between religious practice and public displays of religion.

### Welcome

 Say: *Welcome to Making Faith Matter - let's begin by saying the theme verse together, "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth." (1 John 3:18)*

Do: Lead a short pray.



5 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Review

 Say: How did it go this week with your application?

Do: Hear from 2-3 people.

 Say: Remember the key learning objectives from last session:

- ❖ We made a commitment to “lifestyle service” as an act of obedience and service to God.
- ❖ We discovered our individual passion areas for service.
- ❖ And we committed to explore the “least of these” service area(s) we selected that align with our passion, skill and experience.



10 Minutes

### Overview

 Say: The main topic for today's class is - serving in the public square, speaking up for those who “have no voice.”

Do: Show DVD intro.

 Say: Let's share your answers to the homework.

Do: Go through as many questions as time allows.

#### What may come up in this session:

- ❖ Dual citizenships – God's Kingdom and America and what that means.
- ❖ America not being founded as a Christian nation.



60 Minutes

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 6

## PARTICIPATING IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE



### Summary

 Say: Today we covered a lot of ground, but it was important to do so. We discussed the differences between American and Christian values, and that we all have a shared responsibility to each other.

We recognized that faith communities cannot take care of the “least of these” alone – that there is a role for compassionate public policy, and so we talked about seeing government budgets as moral documents.

We looked at our role in the civic arena to vote, be informed and pray – and to understand the appropriate relationship between our roles as citizens of God’s kingdom and America.

And we learned that our religious freedoms are secured by the separation of the church from the state, and to recognize the difference between religious practice and public displays of religion.



10 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Preview

 Say: **Session Seven's** homework will take you into the topic of speaking up confidently while being civil, loving and winsome.

### Conclusion

 Pray: May the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts and the actions of our hands and feet be acceptable in Thy sight, oh Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Grant us discernment in knowing and doing your will. Help us read your word with heart and mind. Reveal to us what we are doing right and what we might need to do differently. Open our eyes Lord to the needs of those around us. Amen.

 Say: May **God** guide you this week as you “make your faith matter.”

This session is concluded.



5 Minutes

## S e s s i o n 7

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### **SOLUTIONS vs. SHOUTING MATCHES**

Speaking Truth in Love



With our lives. In our communities.  
Through our churches.



# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 7 SOLUTIONS vs. SHOUTING MATCHES



### Learning Objectives:

This session will encourage participants:

- ❖ To know how to talk civilly about social policy issues in a way that reflects their faith...how to disagree well.
- ❖ To think for themselves regarding values and definitions...to explore what the Bible says to them.

### Welcome

 Say: *Welcome to Making Faith Matter - let's begin by saying the theme verse together, "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth." (1 John 3:18)*

Do: Lead a short pray.





## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Review

 Say: How did it go this week with your application?

Do: Hear from 2-3 people.

 Say: Remember the key learning objectives from last session, I'm sure they stirred thoughts and questions:

- ❖ We discussed the differences between American and Christian values, and that we all have a shared responsibility to each other.
- ❖ We recognized that faith communities cannot take care of the “least of these” alone – that there is a role for compassionate public policy, and so we talked about seeing government budgets as moral documents.
- ❖ We looked at our role in the civic arena to vote, be informed and pray – and to understand the appropriate relationship between our roles as citizens of God's kingdom and America.
- ❖ And we learned that our religious freedoms are secured by the separation of the church from the state, and how to recognize the difference between religious practice and public displays of religion.



10 Minutes

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 7 SOLUTIONS vs. SHOUTING MATCHES



### Overview

 Say: *The main topic for today's class is - learning to discuss high stakes topics without being disgusting.*

Do: Show DVD intro.

 Say: *Let's share your answers to the homework.*

Do: Go through as many questions as time allows.

### What may come up in this session:

- ❖ The concept of diversity – as pertains to valuing differences of opinions.



35 Minutes

### Course Wrap-up

 Say: *If you have not already done so, please complete the **Covenant to Serve**. Remember - a covenant is a "contract" between you and **God**. It is sacred, and serious. Check only the statements that you can commit to. This is for you to keep.*

Do: Wait a few minutes then ask:

 Say: *Who wants to share what you feel about signing the covenant?*

Do: Hear from 2-3 people.

 Say: *Now, please take a few minutes to record your answers to the post-test.*

Do: Wait a few minutes then ask:

 Say: *How did your answers change from the pre- to the post-test?*

Do: Hear from 2-3 people.



20 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Summary

 Say: We closed out the 7-weeks today by exploring how we can disagree well, especially when talking about social policy issues. Support for the “least of these” is hurt when we don’t think for ourselves about what God says is truly important.

 Say: What will you do differently because you participated in Making Faith Matter?

Do: Hear from 2-3 people.

 Say: The final paragraph in the course text merits repeating as we conclude.

Being the Kingdom of God here on earth is the responsibility of every believer and it involves both the personal gospel and the service gospel. We are responsible to lovingly care for the least of these and to engage politely and effectively in the public arena. Will you accept the challenge?



15 Minutes

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Session 7 SOLUTIONS vs. SHOUTING MATCHES



### Conclusion

Do: Hand out course evaluations.

 Say: *After I pray and before you go, please complete this course evaluation. It helps us improve the experience for the next class.*

 Pray: *May the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts and the actions of our hands and feet be acceptable in Thy sight, oh Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Grant us discernment in knowing and doing your will. Help us read your word with heart and mind. Reveal to us what we are doing right and what we might need to do differently. Open our eyes Lord to the needs of those around us. Amen.*

 Say: *May God guide you as you “make your faith matter.”*  
*This session is concluded.*

Do: Collect the evaluations



5 Minutes



## A CALL TO SERVICE

### Course Wrap-Up

Please mail the participants' evaluations, along with your own suggestions and comments, to:

Making Faith Matter  
Post Office Box 560908  
Orlando, FL 32856-0908

Also, please get in touch with Charlie Stuart by phone at (407) 230-2125 or by email at [Charlie.Stuart@MakingFaithMatter.org](mailto:Charlie.Stuart@MakingFaithMatter.org) with any questions, comments or ideas.

Thank you for your commitment to making faith matter by facilitating MAKING FAITH MATTER | A Call to Service!



