

ARE YOU READY?



2021 **SERVANT** ♥ **EVENTS**

Devotions, Bible Studies and Worship

Written by **DR. LISA KEYNE**



LCMS Youth Ministry has spent significant time in the last five to 10 years listening, reading data, conducting research and digging into Scripture around what is key for healthy congregational youth ministry. One of the Seven Practices of Healthy Youth Ministry* to come out of this research is that **Healthy Congregations Have Opportunities to Serve & Lead.**

- Congregations **identify gifts and skills in youth** that can be used in service, leadership and vocation inside and outside the church.
- Congregations **invest in youth** by providing consistent opportunities for meaningful contributions.
- Congregations **engage and support youth for service** inside the congregation, in the community and beyond.
- Congregations **empower young people to be load-bearing leaders** by providing training, mentors and space to learn.

For over three decades LCMS Servant Events have provided congregations opportunities equip youth and their adult leaders to serve and lead in many and various settings and situations. Whether it is construction repairs, painting walls, leading children or sorting food, one lesson remains clear and constant: serving others makes a difference because of Jesus Christ.

Thanks for your important role in equipping young people to grow in their faith through serving, leading, sharing Christ and developing relationships.

LCMS YOUTH MINISTRY



lcms.org/lcmsyouth [LCMSYouth](https://www.facebook.com/LCMSYouth) [@lcmsyouth](https://twitter.com/lcmsyouth) [@lcmsyouth](https://www.instagram.com/lcmsyouth)

*For more on the Seven Practices of Healthy Youth Ministry, visit youthsource.com/7-practices/, or contact LCMS Youth Ministry.

SPIRITUAL LIFE RESOURCES

LEADER'S GUIDE

WELCOME! This set of devotions, Bible studies and a closing worship service were designed to help you start and end each day of your Servant Event with a spoken reminder of why Christians do Servant Events: We serve because He first served us! Our service is a joy-filled response to the work of Jesus Christ in our lives. Because He loved you so much that He gave His life as a sacrifice, you want to love others, too! Our lives are offerings to Him. We are the living sacrifices, those who boldly share Christ's love in word and action.

Purpose and rationale of these materials

So how do we get ready to live that way? What does the Christian do in order to prepare? These Bible studies and devotions focus on helping Servant Event participants be ready for God's work throughout the week, as well as helping them understand life back home. What does "being ready" look like? How can I, on a daily basis, be ready? Ultimately, for what do I want or need to be ready?

Special considerations, what you need

Everything you need is right here, although it may be helpful to have newsprint paper, markers and a projection option. You are free to duplicate the following pages for your group. Add your favorite songs to the Bible studies and worship service. Servant Event participants will need a Bible for the Bible studies.

Pre-Event Bible Study

The pre-event Bible study is to be used by each individual congregation before departing for the Servant Event. One assumption is that those within each church will group know each other at least a little, so the idea is to start the sharing early, so that most will feel comfortable sharing or contributing to the questions at the Servant Event.

While you will probably have had other meetings to discuss details of the trip, this study discusses "being prepared" for this trip which includes all sorts of things: directions to the place you are going, transportation arrangements, supplies, anticipating surprises. Work through the questions on the first page of this study as

Bible study preparations

At most events a Community Life Leader (CLL) is responsible for coordinating each day's devotion and Bible study. S/he will need to decide how to present each day's events. The most important preparation the CLL can do before leaving home is to make enough copies of the studies and remind Servant Event participants to bring a Bible! Of course, if they are truly READY for the Servant Event, how could they forget their Bibles?

Size of the group

The devotions and Bible studies are written with several assumptions:

- People participate more in smaller groups.
- Youth from one church's group may not all know each other very well.
- There may be groups from multiple churches in attendance at this Servant Event.

As a result, there are suggestions for partnering or creating smaller groups of four. Use your judgment! If the number of participants is small enough, and they know each other, you may choose to do some of the sharing questions in the larger group. But, if the entire group is larger than 10 or 12, allow time for small group sharing.

One of the real joys of serving together is the chance for youth to make friends with people from other places, and to encourage those friends in their Christian journey — so don't be afraid to mix up the groups.

a review of all those plans you have already made and discussed.

Ephesians 4 will remind the servants that there is more to getting ready for this trip than just packing the right things and figuring out how to get to your event. How do you prepare spiritually to be a servant? How do you prepare to live closely with a new group, some of whom you have never met before? Remembering that God goes with you on your journey, and hears all your group is asking, and knows your every need, should help the servants have greater confidence as they prepare for service and surprises.

As you think about the actions called for in Ephesians — stand firm, take up, be alert, make known — review how each is described in the verses. Prayer is so important because it is the concrete action which demonstrates our reliance on God as the Author and Creator of our service and the good that comes from it.

A “cord of three strands” is sometimes used to describe a husband and wife, tied together with a third cord, God. This imagery is beautiful for the whole community of faith

as well, as we see each other as brothers and sisters, connected by the cord of Christ.

Do allow some time for silent prayer. You may start the group with some prayers specific to your group and its needs. Then provide some time for all to pray silently. Finally, use the printed prayer as a commitment for the week.

Morning Devotions

The opening devotion for each morning is intended to be short, about 15 minutes. The main purpose is to help get everyone focused on the day, “readied” for how God is going to work through the group in their activities. The same routine is used every morning, and the same song and cheer are included to provide a built-in tradition or ritual, something of a “liturgy” for your group. However, you may use different songs, rather than those included in each morning’s devotion.

Key components of the devotions include:

- Encourage participants to use loud, confident voices as they read together the Psalm to begin each devotion. The first Psalm sets the tone for the rest of the week, as we are reminded to “Shout to the Lord,” making a joy-filled noise. We boldly proclaim His work and prepare to go out into our day!
- A section of Scripture & discussion questions. Each day the passage and questions try to address a different aspect of service. After the Scripture passage is read out loud, divide the group up to discuss the questions. Have participants spend a few minutes discussing the questions in different pairs or triads each day. You may not have time for all the questions included, so assign certain ones or give a time limit to the discussion.
- Learning about prayer. Prayer is a discipline. As in any other discipline, it is developed through practice and use. Each day a different method of prayer is used. The group moves from leader-led prayer to all in the group participating. Prayer is a primary element in helping us to “be ready” for whatever is to come — during the Servant Event, and beyond.
- The “Are You Ready?” shout out. Think about including it each morning to bring the participants together again, and as the final focus before you go out to your service. You may want to clap together to get a good rhythm going.

Day One Devotion — “Not Quite Ready...”: This week is a wonderful opportunity to learn about loving others.

“Love your neighbor as yourself” means our attitude towards all people is love — because Christ loved us enough to offer His very life for us on the cross! Loving others does not eliminate the Law. Rather, when the love we share is Spirit-driven, we understand why keeping the law is so important. We want to protect and help each other. Our service this week, and every day, is infused with the love of Christ.

Day Two Devotion — “Ready and Waiting!”: Serving does not provide instant gratification! The participants may not see the direct result of their service this week. But they can see or hear about the hope of those they are serving. True Christian service understands we are not serving for any other reason than that Christ loved us first! Patience is an essential fruit of the Spirit when serving.

Day Three Devotion — “Don’t Get Distracted!”: The “great cloud of witnesses” — what a beautiful image for knowing we are not alone in our service! We are motivated and encouraged by the work of those who went before us and by the presence of our Christian brothers and sisters serving alongside of us this week. Christ is the ultimate role model for us. We are encouraged as we remember His suffering, how He went through so much, because of His great love for us. How can we not be ready to serve?

Day Four Devotion — “To Love Your Enemies?”: It is easier to say we should love than to really live that love. But we have such a beautiful example of perfect love in the life of Jesus, and His willingness to die for our sins. Loving our neighbor — and our enemies — is not just words, but action and truth. Allow some private time for participants to think about how they can practice this love this week with the people on this Servant Event.

Day Five Devotion — “Ready or Not, World, Here I Come!”: Serving presents many challenges: personal rejection, limited resources of time and money, uncomfortable living conditions, heat and humidity in outdoor work,

or discomfort in new settings or situations. But we are not in this alone! No matter how difficult it might get, Christ is interceding for us. And that means we are able to endure situations we never thought we would, or could!

Day Six Devotion — “Ready To Go Home”: We have an identity as God’s people. Our Christian journey starts with Baptism, and culminates with our homecoming in heaven. As His people, we know our true home is in heaven with Him — “I’m but a stranger here. Heaven is

Bible Studies

The Bible studies provide opportunities for participants to debrief their day in smaller groups. Try to make sure participants do not always end up with people they know, but use this opportunity to have the groups get to know each other better.

The studies discuss different aspects of “Are You Ready?” No songs are indicated, but you could use a few songs to draw the group together and get started and then end your time together.

As facilitator of the studies, try to gauge participation in the groups, insuring that all are interacting. The “Adapt the Story” section each day encourages participants to present the story to the rest of the groups by updating the setting, language, context. For example, the first night’s story talks about a man who knocks on his friend’s window at midnight to ask for a loaf of bread. The participants probably know 24-hour grocery stores are available. But what if their car was out of gas (not prepared!), and they had to get to the airport to pick up that friend? A neighbor sure could be helpful at that point. In the same way, we go to God, asking for all our needs, even when we do not know what to ask.

Encourage participants to be creative in their story adaptations, while also respecting the true integrity of the story. Also, if your group is larger, consider sharing only a few adaptations each night instead of all the group’s stories. Try to include each participant by the end of the week.

LEADER NOTES

DAY ONE BIBLE STUDY — “NOT QUITE READY...”:

No matter how prepared each of you were for this trip, you probably forgot something. Jesus’ teachings about prayer help us to be prepared for anything. “Ask and it will be given you.” But sometimes we do not know how best to ask, or to prepare. Give the participants a chance to discuss how prepared they were before they came to this event.

my home!” Our life on earth, then, is about service, good deeds, that cause those who don’t know God to glorify Him. Service is a response to Christ’s work, and it always points back to God. Asking about the good deeds the group did this week is not bragging! It’s joyfully acknowledging how God has worked through the group so that others would see Him at work! May that work bear fruit in the lives of the participants and those served!

Have participants form groups of four by finding three others who each have done at least one of the following:

- Participated in a previous Servant Event
- Climbed a hill/mountain over 4,000 feet
- Read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- Shopped at the Mall of America in Minneapolis
- Attended an LCMS Youth Gathering
- Laughed so hard at a movie they fell out of a chair

Some suggested responses for the guidelines/motivations exercise are:

Guidelines for prayer

1. You can pray any time of day or night.
2. You can tell Him anything on your mind.
3. Be persistent and bold in prayer.

Motivations for prayer

1. He hears us, and responds.
2. He wants the best for us.
3. He gives graciously.

DAY TWO BIBLE STUDY — “READY AND WAITING!”:

Are you ready? Readiness requires the ability to wait. You can be prepared, you can be willing to go forward, but you must also be able to wait for the right time, the appropriate signals, or for others to catch up with you and your plans or vision. Waiting is not the easy part of being ready. But, as Christians, we know “waiting on the Lord” can be one of the critical factors in being ready.

Ask the group to divide into groups of four by finding people they do not know as well yet.

Five of the bridesmaids were prepared for the bridegroom. They had thought ahead enough that they did not leave their lamps on during the night. The rich young ruler

thought he was ready to follow Jesus, until Jesus told him to go sell all he had in order to follow Him.

We expect things so quickly, and can receive them quickly in lots of areas in our lives. Being ready, though, requires patience, the ability to trust that God is at work in the situation. We may not see results quickly. An example at your Servant Event may be the new relationships you develop, but you never know how your investment of time at this event may impact lives down the road.

DAY THREE BIBLE STUDY — “DON’T GET DISTRACTED!”:

Distractions get in the way of our readiness. It may be difficult to remain focused on the task at hand because of other things we allow to get in the way. Some of those things may look important, but are they really keeping us from the most important thing?

If possible, have each person form a pair by choosing someone they worked with today. Then ask each pair to find another pair they didn’t work with during the day to form a small group of four.

The first assignment is for each person to individually construct a list of personal distractions. Share some of your examples to get them started — watching videos or TV, checking/posting on social media, receiving texts.

Each of those who said they wanted to follow Jesus allowed other things to get in the way. While those may appear to be good and important activities, they were allowing them to distract them from what is most important: following Jesus, and trusting all else would fall into place.

“There is no such thing as an atheist.” Everybody has something which is most important in their lives. In some ways that becomes their “god.” If I spend all my time and energy on hobbies, athletics or work, that may keep me from remembering why I do what I do as a Christian. How do we stay focused?

There are times when we may miss an opportunity to serve if we are TOO focused, and not open to the needs of the people around us. Jesus models how interruptions from people were opportunities to share more about the Kingdom of God. He always had time to answer questions, to heal, to serve. But He also stayed focused on His task of sharing the message of salvation with as many as possible.

DAY FOUR BIBLE STUDY — “TO LOVE YOUR ENEMIES?”:

“Love your enemies” is a difficult teaching. On day four of your Servant Event there may be some participants who see each other as “enemies,” or at least “not friends.” We can also so easily offend those closest to us, as well as those beyond our friendships, because we focus on our own problems, rather than on serving.

To divide the group, do a “forced choice” exercise. Have everyone stand in the middle of the room. Ask them to vote with their feet, going to a side of the room in response to your question. Ask the question, and then point to a different side of the room for each response.

- Would you rather take a vacation in Hawaii or in Europe?
- Would you rather play basketball or tennis?
- Would you rather read a book or scroll your phone?
- Would you rather take the picture or be in the picture?
- Would you rather climb a mountain or scuba dive in the ocean?
- Would you rather text on the phone or receive a card or letter in the mail?

When a response is pretty evenly divided, have two people from one side of the room pair up with two people from the other side to form a group of four.

1. While it doesn’t look as though Cicely has any enemies, help participants understand that speaking badly of someone, or not working for the good of another, are signs of an enemy.
2. The verses in Luke 6 do not mean we should not help our friends — but everyone does that! The Christian is different as s/he reaches out to those who might not otherwise be touched because they are not connected with other people, or they are despised. And we are to expect nothing in return, unlike when we love those closest to us who reciprocate.
3. The story of Jesus and Peter does have a “happy ending.” But Peter must have gone through such agony after he denied his Lord, remembering Jesus had warned him this would happen. Jesus models for us how to love those who hurt us. He really forgave — and forgot — what Peter did, as He now trusts Peter with great responsibility to love His sheep.
4. What does this have to do with a Servant Event? When living in close community, such as this event, there’s bound to be conflict. It’s easy to ignore the conflict, or to actually wish others harm. There can be a tendency to develop “cliques.” There may also be stereotypes about some we serve. It takes effort and Christian love and compassion to live the alternative: reaching out to those we would rather hurt, or thinking about them differently, allowing us to see another side of the individual and the situation.

DAY FIVE BIBLE STUDY — “READY OR NOT, WORLD, HERE I COME!”:

This Servant Event allows your participants to think about how they can serve not just at this event, but back home as well. The Beatitudes share ways Christians may

actually view things differently than the world. Our fundamental values — what we consider to be worthy, right, good — are influenced by Christ's life, and Scripture's call to "love your neighbor." God works through the Christian in the world, as we all hope others come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. The world may not be ready for God's message, but we go out boldly, living lives of service to His glory!

Ask the group to line up in alphabetical order by the first letter of their middle names. If some do not have middle names, they can use the first initial of their first names. If some have multiple middle names, they can choose the one to share. Once in order, break up by fours to form small groups.

1. The Beatitudes are a beautiful section of Scripture that provides a vision of how Christians can live in the world. Help your participants remember we cannot perfectly live the Beatitudes, because we are sinners. Thank God He sent His Son to be our Savior! When we have failed in how we live, we rely on our gracious God and His forgiveness and His desire to have us go on as His people.
2. "Values" is a common term that doesn't fully reflect all God has done for us. Help the participants see the connection between what they say is important in their lives and their choices. It's also helpful to think about how we spend our time — what we allow into our lives does influence other aspects. One value participants might commit to when they return home is reading

the Bible more regularly. It can be a daily reminder of whose we are, and what God desires in our lives.

DAY SIX BIBLE STUDY — "READY TO GO HOME":

It does take energy to end a Servant Event and make the shift to heading back home with all its responsibilities, joys and challenges. This Bible study provides personal, small group and large group time to think through the good that can be celebrated in the week, as well as each participant's personal readiness for heading home.

Ask the group to form groups of four that include people from different church groups if possible. Hopefully groups can form quickly and easily by now. Just watch to make sure all are included.

- The real cause for celebration: "There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Jesus loves us so much that He wants all to repent and be saved. Are we ready to be at home with Jesus? YES, as we believe in Him, knowing that because of His work — His death and resurrection — we have a place in heaven. Make sure participants understand "being ready" to be with Jesus forever is not based on good works, but on His claiming us as His people.
- Allow about eight minutes of personal time for participants to reflect on their own. Be available to those who may want to ask a question or share.
- If your group is large, allow adequate time for all to walk around the room and "celebrate" the gifts of each other.

Worship Service

The worship service is planned as the final element of your Servant Event. It is assumed you have made some new friends during your event and all have served, learned and grown. In some instances, you may be returning to locations that will prevent future face-to-face contact. How do you bring closure to such a rich and rewarding adventure? The best way is to dedicate your week's work to the Lord, and ask for His ongoing guidance and direction as you return to everyday tasks.

The suggested theme for a message is "A Week of Service, A Life of Service — Are You Ready?"

Share a copy of the service with your musician. S/he can choose some songs which fit the theme and lessons, helping the group become familiar with them throughout the week.

A place has been identified where Communion could be celebrated. It is very important to decide if Communion will be included so the pastor leading worship can determine what is needed to be prepared for the service.

Involve as many as possible in leading the service. You could have participants read the lessons. Include time for prayer requests, and don't forget to include a prayer for your specific event, location, people and their futures. You may want to have some silent time prior to the Confession and Absolution.

The Scripture lessons all point to the definition of "sacrifice." A message might summarize the week's thoughts and lessons learned about being ready for service. Now are we ready to go beyond this place, serving God wherever we go? You could ask for comments from the youth about how they now define service, or being ready.

Music

Only a few suggestions are made for songs to include in your devotions, Bible studies and worship service. Most groups have a song leader who knows other song resources to select something to accompany the theme of the day.

“This Little Light of Mine” is used as a theme song for the week. The words and melody are in public domain, so no copyright permission is needed. Think about having your group add its own verses based on what they have learned or experienced each day.



Pre-Event **BIBLE STUDY**



PRE-EVENT BIBLE STUDY

"READY FOR WHAT?"

Where Are We Going?

As a group, discuss your planned Servant Event. By now you should be able to answer questions like:

- WHERE are we going?
 - WHAT will we be doing there?
 - HOW are we going to get there?
 - WHO else will be there with us?
 - WHEN do we leave?

Why Are We Going? What Do We Hope to Accomplish?

Then in pairs, share WHY *you* decided to go along on this Servant Event.

After sharing in pairs, each partner shares briefly with the larger group why his/her partner is coming on this Servant Event. After hearing from each pair, write a group statement that summarizes WHY you are going on this particular Servant Event.

What Do We Need to Take Along?

Now that the details are clear, brainstorm together what you need for the trip. It may be helpful to group items under the following categories:

- Supplies for the actual Servant Event:
- Personal items:
- Things each person needs:
- Things the group needs:

Surprise!

Discuss the kind of surprises you might encounter during your Servant Event. What surprises might there be in travel? Once you arrive? During the service itself? Among those you are serving? Within the team? What does your group need for these surprises or “emergencies”?

Planning a trip takes a lot of time. So many details... A management saying reminds us that if we “fail to plan, we plan to fail.” Have you forgotten any of the big, or little, details?

Read Together:

“Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:14–20).

Discuss:

- A belt, a breastplate, a shield, a helmet, a sword. Did you get those on your list of things to take on your Servant Event? A warrior had a lot of pieces to wear for protection. What do these items remind you to take along on your journey?
- What do you anticipate to be *the* biggest challenge you will encounter? How does this “armor” prepare you for that challenge?
- There are lots of verbs (actions) in these verses: Stand firm, take up, be alert, keep praying, make known. During the coming Servant Event, what are some ways you can...
 - Stand?
 - Take up?
 - Pray?
 - Keep alert?

- Why is prayer such an important “weapon” to take with you on your Servant Event?

Commit:

Traveling and living with a group of people you may not know very well is not always easy. But there are some things that make it so clear that a group effort can be better than an individual one.

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12).

- These verses are sometimes used as the text for weddings. What does the cord of three strands represent?
- What can you contribute to this group: a special skill, expertise, talent?
- How can you affirm the contribution of others in the group?
- Are you ready for this trip? If not, what else can you do to know that you *are* ready?

Pray (without ceasing...):

- Answer this one privately: Are you open and ready to learn from the other members of this group?
- Take time for silent prayer. Start by praying individually for each member of your group. Pray that each may be ready for this trip, and have opportunity to use and develop his/her gifts. Pray for the joy, health

and security of each. Thank God for each person’s willingness to go and serve.

- Commit this trip to God. Prayer is the ultimate way to “be prepared,” the reminder that God is the one active in and through our service. Throughout your trip, keep prayer, conversation with God, a priority. Pray as a group, pray alone, pray out loud, pray silently. Watch how many different ways prayer is woven through your week.

LEADER: Commit your ways to the Lord. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.

GROUP: **We commit our Servant Event, and all our ways, to You, Lord!**

LEADER: Lord God, give us all we need to make this trip one of growth, faith and love. Provide the courage and commitment that will help us serve in spite of the surprises. Provide each person here with the wisdom needed for our tasks during our Servant Event. Help us to support and encourage our brothers and sisters in this group, and in the groups we will get to know. May we share Your love and compassion, and may those we serve see their needs met. Thank You for safe travel, good preparation and the opportunity to serve You! We put our families and tasks at home in Your hands, knowing that You are caring for their needs. And now help us to know we are ready for this trip because You go with us, supplying all our needs, and giving us the confidence needed for joy-filled service. We ask all this in the name of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. So we now go in peace to serve our Lord.

GROUP: **Thanks be to God!**

DEVOTIONS



DAY ONE DEVOTION

"NOT QUITE READY..."

Read aloud together:

PSALM 100 (ESV)

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

Know that the Lord, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations.

Opening Song:

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!

(Repeat two more times.)

Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

All around the world, I'm going to let it shine!

(Repeat two more times.)

Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

Jesus is the Light! The way, the truth, the Light!

(Repeat two more times.)

Jesus shines, all the time, Jesus shines!

Are you ready to go and share His love?

(Repeat two more times.)

Share His love, everywhere! Share His love!

Verse of the Day:

ROMANS 13:8–14 (ESV)

"Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: **'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'** Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first

believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."

Discussion:

- What does Paul say about the Law, particularly the Ten Commandments?
- It's a different way of looking at the Law, isn't it? The Law isn't eliminated, but if we truly love our neighbor, we won't *want* to steal from him, or lie about him.
- Who is the neighbor we are to love?
- Why does he talk about "waking up?" What does it mean *for us* at this time?
- Today is the first day of your Servant Event.
- What kind of "neighbors" do you think you will meet throughout this week?
- What should our response be to these neighbors?
- What does that response look like?
- Are you ready for today? If not, what else can you do to know that you *are* ready?

Prayer:

Commit your "readiness" to God. Today's prayer is led by the team leader. What prayer requests are present in the group?

Sending Shout Out:

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!

LEADER: Ready for what?

GROUP: To serve and praise God!

LEADER: Service where?

GROUP: Where He leads us.

LEADER: Why and how?
GROUP: He loves, so we love.
LEADER: Ready or not, world,
GROUP: He's prepared us!
LEADER: Ready and waiting?
GROUP: Watch and pray!
LEADER: Are you ready?
GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!
LEADER: Are you ready?
GROUP: We ARE ready!



DAY TWO DEVOTION

"READY AND WAITING!"

Read aloud together:

PSALM 16 (ESV)

"Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord,
I have no good apart from you.'

As for the saints in the land, they are the
excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight.

The sorrows of those who run after another god
shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names on my lips.

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup
you hold my lot.
The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel
in the night also my heart instructs me.
I have set the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall
not be shaken.

Therefore, my heart is glad, and my whole
being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.
For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.

You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Opening Song:

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!
(Repeat two more times.)
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

All around the world, I'm going to let it shine!
(Repeat two more times.)
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

Jesus is the Light! The way, the truth, the Light!
(Repeat two more times.)
Jesus shines, all the time, Jesus shines!

Are you ready to go and share His love?

(Repeat two more times.)

Share His love, everywhere! Share His love!

Verse of the Day:

ROMANS 8:22-25 (ESV)

"For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

Discussion:

- Reread the last line. What is it that "we do not yet have"?
- Define "hope." What is it? Give a concrete example of what it looks like.
- Define "patience." What is it? Give a concrete example of what it looks like.
- What do hope and patience have to do with the Christian?
- How have you seen hope and patience in the lives of those you are serving this week?
- As you are serving this week, in what real ways do you need hope and patience?
- Are you ready for today? If not, what else can you do to know that you *are* ready?

Prayer:

Do a circle prayer today. Each person can complete the following sentence: "Lord, give me patience as I wait for _____. For example, "Lord, give me patience as I wait for understanding," or, "Lord, give me patience as I wait for answers to my questions about the future." Holding hands allows a person to pass by squeezing the hand next in line.

Sending Shout Out:

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!

LEADER: Ready for what?

GROUP: To serve and praise God!

LEADER: Service where?

GROUP: Where He leads us.

LEADER: Why and how?

GROUP: He loves, so we love.

LEADER: Ready or not, world,

GROUP: He's prepared us!

LEADER: Ready and waiting?

GROUP: Watch and pray!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!



DAY THREE DEVOTION

"DON'T GET DISTRACTED!"

Read aloud together:

PSALM 62 (ESV)

"For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.

How long will all of you attack a man
to batter him,
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
They only plan to thrust him down from his
high position.

They take pleasure in falsehood.
They bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse.

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.
He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us.

Those of low estate are but a breath;
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.
Put no trust in extortion;
set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.

Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.
For you will render to a man
according to his work."

Opening Song:

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!
(Repeat two more times.)
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

All around the world, I'm going to let it shine!

(Repeat two more times.)

Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

Jesus is the Light! The way, the truth, the Light!

(Repeat two more times.)

Jesus shines, all the time, Jesus shines!

Are you ready to go and share His love?

(Repeat two more times.)

Share His love, everywhere! Share His love!

Verse of the Day:

HEBREWS 12:1-3 (ESV)

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted."

Discussion:

- What, or who, is the "great cloud of witnesses" that the author mentions?
- What encouragement is there in knowing that we are surrounded by this cloud of witnesses?
- How are all the servants at this Servant Event like the "great cloud of witnesses?" What encouragement is there in knowing you are part of this group?
- In what ways might you be feeling weary this morning?
- How can you "consider" Jesus? Share something from Jesus' life with a partner that you think may help them overcome the weariness we can experience as we serve.
- Are you ready for today? If not, what else can you do to know that you are ready?

Prayer:

Today, pray with a partner. In the prayer you offer, include those things your partner shared, and know that your partner will pray for your concerns.

Sending Shout Out:

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!

LEADER: Ready for what?

GROUP: To serve and praise God!

LEADER: Service where?

GROUP: Where He leads us.

LEADER: Why and how?

GROUP: He loves, so we love.

LEADER: Ready or not, world,

GROUP: He's prepared us!

LEADER: Ready and waiting?

GROUP: Watch and pray!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!



DAY FOUR DEVOTION

"TO LOVE YOUR ENEMIES?"

Read aloud together:

PSALM 30 (ESV)

"I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.
O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.
O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go
down to the pit.

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.
For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

As for me, I said in my prosperity,
'I shall never be moved.'
By your favor, O Lord,
you made my mountain stand strong;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.

To you, O Lord, I cry,
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:
'What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?
Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me!
O Lord, be my helper!'

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,
that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!"

Opening Song:

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!
(Repeat two more times.)
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

All around the world, I'm going to let it shine!
(Repeat two more times.)
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

Jesus is the Light! The way, the truth, the Light!
(Repeat two more times.)

Jesus shines, all the time, Jesus shines!

Are you ready to go and share His love?

(Repeat two more times.)

Share His love, everywhere! Share His love!

Verse for the Day:

1 JOHN 4:7-12; 19-21 (ESV)

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. ... We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."

Discussion:

- What is a common definition of "love"? How is that definition lived out in the real world?
- How is love defined in these verses? What would that love look like if lived today?
- Why is the word "brother" used here? What if you don't have a biological brother?

After the group has discussed the preceding questions, break off and individually reflect on the last few questions:

- Are you having difficulty with someone this week? Try to identify *your* responsibility, and what you could do to make the situation better. Does it help to think of the person as a brother or sister? Sometimes it is the person we are closest to that we have the hardest time accepting the quirks of or forgiving. But it is also the relationship that has the most at stake.
- Are you ready for today? If not, what else can you do to know that you *are* ready?

Prayer:

Pray privately today. Make sure to include a prayer for the person with whom you may be having difficulty. You'll be amazed at how the Lord helps us to feel better about those for whom we are praying. Remember your family back home, as well as this "family" of your Servant Event.

Sending Shout Out:

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!

LEADER: Ready for what?

GROUP: To serve and praise God!

LEADER: Service where?

GROUP: Where He leads us.

LEADER: Why and how?

GROUP: He loves, so we love.

LEADER: Ready or not, world,

GROUP: He's prepared us!

LEADER: Ready and waiting?

GROUP: Watch and pray!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!



"READY OR NOT, WORLD, HERE I COME!"

Read aloud together:

PSALM 138 (ESV)

"I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love
and your faithfulness,
for you have exalted above all things
your name and your word.
On the day I called, you answered me;
my strength of soul you increased.

All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O Lord,
for they have heard the words of your mouth,
and they shall sing of the ways of the Lord,
for great is the glory of the Lord.
For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly,
but the haughty he knows from afar.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life;
you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my
enemies,
and your right hand delivers me.
The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands."

Opening Song:

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!
(Repeat two more times.)
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

All around the world, I'm going to let it shine!
(Repeat two more times.)
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

Jesus is the Light! The way, the truth, the Light!
(Repeat two more times.)
Jesus shines, all the time, Jesus shines!

Are you ready to go and share His love?
(Repeat two more times.)
Share His love, everywhere! Share His love!

Verse of the Day:

ROMANS 8:31–39 (ESV)

"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

'For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.'

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Discussion:

- What are some of the greatest challenges you have encountered this week? What made these things challenges?
- Does serving always have challenges? What kind?
- Did you think this would be an easy week for you? In which ways might you describe the week as easy? What contributed to the "easy-ness?"
- Can you name some of the challenges that the New Testament Christians had to face? Hint: Reread today's verses.
- What do we know for certain whenever we confront new challenges? How is this perspective different from the usual human response to trouble, hardship, persecution, peer pressure?
- Are you ready for today? If not, what else can you do to know that you are ready?

Prayer:

Form circles of four. Each person prays for a challenge or thanksgiving of the person on his/her left.

Sending Shout Out:

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!

LEADER: Ready for what?

GROUP: To serve and praise God!

LEADER: Service where?

GROUP: Where He leads us.

LEADER: Why and how?

GROUP: He loves, so we love.

LEADER: Ready or not, world,

GROUP: He's prepared us!

LEADER: Ready and waiting?

GROUP: Watch and pray!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!



DAY SIX DEVOTION

"READY TO GO HOME"

Read aloud together:

PSALM 92 (ESV)

"It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,
to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.
For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

How great are your works, O Lord!
Your thoughts are very deep!
The stupid man cannot know;
the fool cannot understand this:
that though the wicked sprout like grass
and all evildoers flourish,
they are doomed to destruction forever;
but you, O Lord, are on high forever.
For behold, your enemies, O Lord,
for behold, your enemies shall perish;
all evildoers shall be scattered.

But you have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox;
you have poured over me fresh oil.
My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies;
my ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants.

The righteous flourish like the palm tree
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
They are planted in the house of the Lord;
they flourish in the courts of our God.
They still bear fruit in old age;
they are ever full of sap and green,
to declare that the Lord is upright;
he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

Opening Song:

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!
(Repeat two more times.)
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

All around the world, I'm going to let it shine!
(Repeat two more times.)
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

Jesus is the Light! The way, the truth, the Light!
(Repeat two more times.)
Jesus shines, all the time, Jesus shines!

Are you ready to go and share His love?

(Repeat two more times.)

Share His love, everywhere! Share His love!

Verse of the Day:

1 PETER 2:9–12, 16–17 (ESV)

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. ...

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."

Discussion:

- Some describe the Christian's life in this world as a journey. In which ways has this week been a journey? Where did the journey start, and where is it ending?
- For which good deeds will those you have served this week "glorify God on the day he visits?"
- "Live as servants of God." How will you hope to continue your service when you get back home?
- What are your hopes for this last day of your Servant Event?
- Are you ready for today? If not, what else can you do to know that you *are* ready?

Prayer:

Form a circle (or multiple circles if the group is too big to do this in the short morning devotion period). All have a chance to pray for any concerns or joys about which they are thinking. Remember to thank God for the unexpected things that occurred this week. Don't forget to pray for those from other churches who you may not see regularly after this Servant Event.

Sending Shout Out:

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!

LEADER: Ready for what?

GROUP: To serve and praise God!

LEADER: Service where?

GROUP: Where He leads us.

LEADER: Why and how?

GROUP: He loves, so we love.

LEADER: Ready or not, world,

GROUP: He's prepared us!

LEADER: Ready and waiting?

GROUP: Watch and pray!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!



BIBLE STUDY



DAY ONE BIBLE STUDY

"NOT QUITE READY..."

Sharing

In your small group, introduce yourselves: name, church and location, why you came on this Servant Event.

Did any of you forget something for this trip? How are you getting along without that item, or what have you done to get a replacement? What are you most relieved that you did not forget?

Read the Story

In your group, read Luke 11:1–13.

Discuss the Story

- Summarize this portion of Luke. What's the main point of the whole section?
- What did the disciples ask of Jesus? How did Jesus respond?
- Jesus gives the example of someone who forgot to get groceries before his out-of-town guests arrived. Why does his neighbor finally help out?
- Jesus talks about what a son asks of his father. What is His point in that example?
- See if you can identify three guidelines and motivations for prayer in this section of Scripture:
 - Guidelines for prayer
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - Motivations for prayer
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Jesus says, "Ask and it shall be given to you." What about when you don't know what to ask? Can you think of something at this Servant Event that has been a total surprise? How would you have known to pray for that particular surprise? See Romans 8:26–27. Even when we don't know what to "ask," the Spirit is hard at work for us.

Adapt the Story

In your group, rewrite the story, updating the incident. Be prepared to share your adaptation with the other groups. You can retell it as a skit, design a picture or just update the context and language.

Tell the Story

Each group shares their adaptations.

Being prepared, or ready, means anticipating what might come, what you might encounter along the way.

- How did the pre-Servant Event preparations and discussions help to make your trip successful so far?

Apply the Story

Return to your small groups and have each person complete one or more of the following sentences:

"One joy I experienced today was..."

"A challenge I experienced today was..."

"I wish I would have been more prepared for..."

"Tomorrow I will be more ready for..."

Prayer

Commit the rest of the week and each group member's preparedness to God through prayer. Have each person pray for the challenges and wishes of the person on his/her left, and then conclude the prayers with the Lord's Prayer.

DAY TWO BIBLE STUDY

"READY AND WAITING!"

Sharing

In your small group, read the following, and respond to the questions.

Lucy met Joe at a school dance. She thought they were having a lot of fun, and was thrilled when he said he would text her — sometime. That “sometime” still hasn’t come.

Mitch applied for a great job. The manager said she would contact him within a week. That was eight weeks ago.

Mandy cleaned out the basement while her parents were away for a week. Wow, was it a dirty job — but she got it done! She wanted it to be a surprise for her parents, so she didn’t say anything. But they’ve been home almost eight hours and haven’t said a thing!

A long-awaited movie or television series has finally gone into production. Just when will it be available to watch?

- Share something you have a hard time waiting for.
- What is your typical response when you have to wait for something?
- *Why* is it so hard to wait? What makes it difficult?
- Have you figured out anything that helps make waiting a little easier?

Read the Story

Today, read two stories: The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1–13) and the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18–30).

What do these stories have in common?

Discuss the Story

- What were the bridesmaids waiting for in Matthew 25?
- How had they prepared for the groom’s arrival?
- Why were some of them unprepared when the bridegroom finally arrived?
- What was the result of not being prepared?
- What was it that the rich young ruler wanted of Jesus?
- How had he prepared for what he wanted?

- Why was he not prepared when he heard what Jesus asked of him?
- What was the result of not being prepared?
- Can you identify with anyone in these stories? The prepared bridesmaids? The unprepared bridesmaids? The rich young ruler? The apostles? Explain your choice.

Adapt the Story

Rewrite the story of the rich young ruler, this time providing a “happy ending.” What could have happened that would indicate he heard and understood what Jesus was trying to teach? Feel free to adapt as a skit, design a picture or change the imagery to help make the connection.

Tell the Story

Share your adaptations with the whole group.

Apply the Story

Return to your small group and share the answers to the following questions.

- In which ways have you had to become a good “waiter” during this Servant Event?
- Can you identify the values and the challenges of waiting? See if you can come up with three of each:
 - Waiting is good because ...
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - Waiting is hard because ...
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Come together again as a large group to share your lists.

- You are putting in a lot of work this week during this Servant Event. What are some of the things you have already accomplished?

- You may never know the outcome of some of your work. What work or efforts might you make this week, and yet never know the outcome?
- What makes your efforts this week worthwhile?
- What might those you are serving this week be waiting for?
- How can you make the wait easier for them?
- God's timing is something we do not understand, and cannot identify on our calendars. "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). What might be one question you would ask God about His timing? After thinking about the question, read the following verse:

"But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God. My times are in your hand'" (Ps. 31:14–15).

As long as we are on this earth, we will have questions about why things happen, why other things don't happen sooner, about our roles in making things happen. So many expressions remind us that waiting is not a bad thing. "Things take time." "Good things come to those who wait." But waiting becomes more difficult because so many other things have been sped up in our lives. Smart phones, laptops, cars, air travel, apps — so many tools can help us get more things done, and get them done faster.

Waiting becomes a "discipline," something which takes training and practice. But as Christians, we realize the importance of waiting, and letting God work in and through each situation. "Wait on the Lord" is a reminder that God is active in our lives. "For my ways are not your ways" (Isaiah 55:8) — another reminder that we may not always understand the timing of situations. Hold on to the words of the Psalm: "You are my God. My times are in your hand"!

Prayer

Form a large circle. Leader starts the prayer and then others can share:

Lord, we have come to the end of another day of service. Thank You for providing for all our needs. We ask that You would provide restful sleep so we may be energized for tomorrow's tasks. We also commit to You those we are serving. We know they are waiting for _____, and we ask that You allow us to be Your instrument in providing for their need. Teach us how to be ready for service, and patient in our waiting. Amen.



DAY THREE BIBLE STUDY

"DON'T GET DISTRACTED!"

Sharing

Individually, write a list of the things that are your worst distractions — the things that can keep you from accomplishing the task at hand or staying focused.

In your small group, share your lists, and construct one list of distractions. Do you have similar distractions? Identify the group's top three things/activities that cause the greatest or easiest distraction.

Come together as a large group and list on newsprint the top three distractions from each group.

Discuss what the distractions tell you about yourself and the group.

- What are the most typical excuses for justifying the distraction?
- What do your distractions tell you about your readiness for the task at hand?
- Were there any "distractions" that almost kept you from coming on this Servant Event?

Read the Story

Today's lesson is not especially easy to understand. But it sure does help us think about what it means to be ready! In your small groups, read Luke 9:57–62.

Discuss the Story

Thousands of people were following Jesus. Some were truly interested in what He was saying. Some were wondering if He was indeed the promised Messiah they had been waiting for for centuries! Some wanted to see if Jesus really could perform miracles. And then there were those who were trying to trick Jesus into saying something that could be proven to be false, or that could be used against Him.

In this story we have the example of several people who said that they wanted to follow Jesus. Can you imagine what Jesus' daily life was like? He traveled a lot, mostly by foot (and without Nikes!). He did not know where He would sleep at night, or when He would eat next (and His disciples weren't good at meal planning either!). He had left His family behind, and knew that one of His closest companions would betray Him. Not exactly what you would expect for a king!

- What excuses were used in these verses to demonstrate that each person was not quite ready to follow Jesus?
- What do their distractions tell you about what was important in their lives?
- Do you think Jesus is saying that we should not take care of our families?
- What was Jesus trying to say with His responses?

Adapt the Story

Think about your service this week. A number of things may have distracted you from remaining focused on why you are here. In your small group, remind yourselves of the real reason you are here this week. What is your purpose? What is going to help your group remain focused throughout the rest of this week? Retell today's lesson, adapting it to your group and your Servant Event.

Tell the Story

Share your adaptations with the other groups.

Apply the Story

Return to your small groups and share the following:

- Do you remember why you came to this Servant Event? Share that with your group.
- What are some of the things that you had to give up in order to attend this Servant Event? Has it been difficult to do without those things this week? As a result of giving up those things, what have you accomplished?
- Yesterday you discussed how waiting is difficult — particularly waiting to see the results of your work. How can waiting and the desire for acknowledgement be major distractions in a Servant Event?
- Some have said that time is one of the most important commodities in the 21st century. Everybody wants more of it — more vacation time, more family time, more time for volunteering, more time to learn and grow. What would you like to do if you had more time?
- Time, just like money, can be invested. Distractions can be seen as time wasters. How was your time this week an investment?

- How are interruptions by people different from “distractions”? Give an example. How did Jesus view questions from people? Were they distractions?

The theme for this week’s Bible studies is “Are You Ready?” We may not always know the best process to get ready. But it can be very easy to identify what keeps us from getting ready. What are we getting ready for? What’s the best way to keep our focus?

Prayer

Your group has made it through the middle of your Servant Event. Take seriously the comments about distractions, and pray as a whole group that all may remain focused on why you came on this event, and the service you are providing. Commit the group’s distractions to God, reading together 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 at the conclusion of the prayer:

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:16–18).



DAY FOUR BIBLE STUDY

"TO LOVE YOUR ENEMIES?"

Sharing

In your small group, read the following story, then answer the questions.

Cicely is a new girl at your school. She moved from a city almost 2,000 miles away. Through the campus "network" you hear she isn't very smart. You also learn she is "weird," hangs out by herself, dresses differently and uses expressions none of you have ever heard. In your science class you learn she has been assigned to be your partner. She shyly hands you a note on the way out of class: "I'm looking forward to working with you on our project."

During the weekend some of your friends are making fun of Cicely, and want to know how you are going to get out of being her partner. Before you can respond, they start to come up with numerous plans to help you "get rid of the weird new girl."

How would you respond to your friends?

Have you ever been that "weird new person"? Ever felt like nobody wanted to be your friend? What advice would you have for Cicely if you could talk to her?

Would your church youth group welcome her more warmly than that school group? Why or why not? If there is a difference, and if so, what makes the difference?

According to Webster's Dictionary, an enemy is "one who hates or bears ill will toward another." On the surface it may not look like Cicely has enemies — people who hate her — but there sure are people who are not trying to help her feel at home, who are "bearing ill will" toward her. Do you have any enemies? Are there times when even our closest friends can be our "enemies"?

Read the Story

In your small group read the following verses: Luke 6:27–38.

Discuss the Story

These verses are not the easiest verses to apply to our lives.

- What makes these verses so difficult to follow?
- When you think of the definition of "enemy" as those who bear ill will toward you, not just those who hate

you, can you identify those in your own life who you should be loving?

- Think back to this morning's devotion and the definition of "love." What does it really mean to "love our enemies"? What would that look like on a daily basis?

Read the following verses: John 13:36–38; John 18:25–27.

- Peter loved Jesus so much that he gave up all he had to follow Jesus. Why did he deny Jesus three times, even after he had been warned by Jesus that this would happen?
- Would Peter have considered himself Jesus' enemy? Did he act like Jesus' enemy?
- Do you always treat those closest to you how you'd like to treat them? What gets in the way?
- What does any of this have to do with the Servant Event you are at this week???

There's more to the story of Peter and Jesus. Read John 21:15–17. The conversation between Jesus and Peter is interesting because Jesus asks Peter three times whether Peter loves Him.

- How many times did Peter deny Jesus?
- It may not be easy to love our enemies, and yet Jesus was able to love and forgive Peter. How can we go forward, truly loving our "enemies"?

Adapt the Story

If time permits, come up with your own scenario of a time when it may be difficult to "love your enemies."

Tell the Story

Be prepared to share your story with other groups, helping them see a live demonstration of how to apply these verses.

Apply the Story

We are God's servants every day of our lives, joyfully living His love. It's easy to serve some people, but then there are those who are downright impossible to love and serve. But the Christian must be different from the world, particularly in this way. A worldly, rational approach might promote revenge, or getting even. "Do unto others as they did unto you."

Why is it different for Christians? As we walk in the light that is Jesus, we have the ability to do what we would otherwise find impossible. God provides the ability to relate to those we had no desire to relate to. And God's love opens the doors to Sharing the Gospel in many ways.

Prayer

Close by saying together the song Zechariah offered to the Lord after the birth of his son, John the Baptist. May it be an inspiration as you remember the Lord saves us from our enemies, showing us how to love them, enabling us to share the joy of salvation with those He prepares to hear:

*"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people
and has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
that we should be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us;
to show the mercy promised to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us
that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the
shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:68–79).*

"READY OR NOT, WORLD, HERE I COME!"

Sharing

In your small group, respond to the following questions:

- What makes an hour go so fast for you that it's over before you know it?
- What makes an hour go so slow for you that it seems to last forever?
- What would you do if you had one extra free day every week?
- If you won the lottery, what would you do with your winnings?
- What do these answers say about you? What is important to you, and why are those things important? What makes something important or valuable?

We have so many options, and so many decisions to make! We choose how to spend our day, how to spend our money, what we read or don't read for a class, what we do with our friends. Even though it may seem as if lots of other people are determining what you do — your teachers, your friends, your parents — ultimately it is your choice!

So what provides direction to you? What is important to you? What is so important to you that you let it influence all you do? With so many choices and options, how do we decide? The most important things to you, your fundamental values, are the foundation for choices. So many things are vying for your attention, and to be the center of your universe.

Values are defined as "a person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgement of what is import in life" (*New Oxford American Dictionary*).

- How do you define "values"?
- Where do most people get their values?
- Are our values only impacted by the things we would choose? Explain your answer.

Read the Story

Read Matthew 5:1–16.

Discuss the Story

This section of Scripture is the beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The first section, the Beatitudes, or "Blessed are," give some clear direction about what is important, what is needed, in our world.

- According to these verses, who are the blessed?

- How do these characteristics fit in with what you think the world would say is important?
- Would it be easy to live these characteristics on a daily basis? If not, what keeps us trying to live them? What encourages us when we think we are not doing such a good job?

Adapt the Story

Think of your Servant Event this week. How have you seen the Beatitudes at work? In your group identify a specific time or situation which you believe models what the Beatitudes are trying to teach.

Tell the Story

Share the situations you identified with the larger group.

Apply the Story

Now we see more clearly that for which we are readying ourselves.

- What promise accompanies each blessing in the Beatitudes?
- How are these promises different from our promise of salvation?
- What if each Christian really lived the Beatitudes? What would be the result? Is the world ready? Why or why not?
- What keeps us from living the Beatitudes? How could we get better at it?
- The Christian really is asked to live a "radical" life when compared to what the world values. Why is it important that we do not forget that we are called to be salt and light in the world?

Prayer

Can you think of one more "value" you would like to develop? Share with your small group what you have learned about yourself this week, and in which ways you hope you can continue to grow when you get back home. Thank God for what you have seen in each other's lives this week. Then pray in your small group for each other's growth as salt and light in the world.

"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:16–18).

DAY SIX BIBLE STUDY

"READY TO GO HOME"

Sharing

In your small group, share the answers to the following questions.

- If you knew you were going to be stranded on a deserted island for three months, what is one item that you would want to make sure you took along with you?
- As you head home from this Servant Event, what is one thing you want to make sure you take home with you?

Read the Story

In your small group, read the Parable of the Lost Son in Luke 15:11–32, and then discuss the questions.

Discuss the Story

- Why did the son want his inheritance?
- The father could have refused his request. Why did the father provide the inheritance early?
- How did the son use his inheritance?
- When the money was gone, what were his options? What did he choose?
- “When he came to his senses...” It was not his first choice to go home. Why not? What was stopping him from going home to his dad?
- What was the father’s response to his son’s return? Why did it surprise the son?
- There’s another participant in the story. What role does the older brother play?
- How does the father respond to the older son’s complaints?
- If you were the older son, what would your reaction be after hearing your dad’s reasons for the celebration?
- Read Luke 15:8–10. Why is the rejoicing part of this story so important? What is the ultimate reason for celebration?

Adapt the Story

You have worked hard together this week. There have been challenges, and there have been joys. In your small group, identify the reasons for rejoicing this week! Be prepared to share them with the other groups.

Tell the Story

You may want to pick one of your favorites, and then try presenting it without words to the others. See if they can guess which incident you chose.

Apply the Story

Are you ready? Our week’s theme helped us to think about being ready for serving. Were we ready to meet other people? Did we bring the right things? Were we committed to the task, or were we distracted by other things in the group, or back home? Were we ready to serve, and not be served? Were we ready to grow? Were we ready to share God’s message of love and salvation in word and action?

- Now that you have come to the end of the week, share how you know you were ready for this event.
- If you were to participate in another service opportunity, how would you prepare differently?
- Can you think of something more that you wish you could have accomplished this week? What “unfinished business” might you be leaving behind?

Personal Time

On your own, think about the following: Are you ready to go home? Bringing things to a close can be difficult. You have new friends. You have been able to help those who may not otherwise receive assistance. You — hopefully — had fun, and got to explore new places. And things back home may not be the most exciting!

- How did the lost son know that it was time to go home?
- What made it difficult to go home? What made it easy?
- What was his reception when he got home? Did that make the effort necessary worthwhile?
- How are you like the lost son? What may make it difficult for you to go home? What is making it easier?
- What else do you need to do to be ready to go home? Do you need to talk to someone, encourage someone, ask for forgiveness, celebrate someone? Make a decision about what else you need or want to do before heading home. Pray, asking God to give you the strength for whatever needs to be done to help you be ready for your homecoming.

Group Time

Re-form your small group. If you would like, share any thoughts you may have from your personal time.

Your friends back home may not understand the joys and challenges you experienced this week. The older son in the story of the Lost Son had a hard time celebrating his brother's return, not understanding all the fuss. But the father had no trouble forgiving and forgetting what his younger son had done. He understood the homecoming was difficult for the son. And he wanted to *celebrate* the good — his son repented of his wrong, humbled himself, asked for forgiveness, and was willing to take a lowly place just to be with his father.

- What is the ultimate homecoming for which we are preparing?
- How do we prepare for our homecoming?

"As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. ... I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:5, 7–8).

Prayer

Now that the week of working together is coming to a close, take a chance to celebrate the gifts of your teammates! Rejoice with each other!

Commit your leaving of this event and your homecomings to God. Pray for the person on your right and the joys and concerns s/he expressed about going home.

As Christians we see each other as members of the Body of Christ. Our gifts complement each other. I may be a foot, you a hand, our friend the nose. I understand that I have some gifts, you have some gifts, and that we are stronger as a result of working together towards the same purpose of worshiping and glorifying God in this world! Take time to go around the room and share with as many as possible, "I rejoice in your gift of _____."

Take time to celebrate the good things that occurred this week. Close the Bible study in large group prayer. Commit the good events of the week to God, asking that He continue to work in and through the work that occurred. Put in His hands the actions and thoughts that need to be forgiven. Thank Him for His graciousness in providing opportunities for service. Ask for His guidance in helping all continue their service back home.

"It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32).

"Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10).

CLOSING WORSHIP SERVICE



“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1–2 ESV).

CLOSING WORSHIP SERVICE

Opening Songs

Invocation

LEADER In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

GROUP Amen.

LEADER The Lord be with you.

GROUP And also with you.

LEADER Let us pray.

Group Lord, this week has gone quickly! We thank You for the opportunities to serve, and to share Your message of salvation and love with others. We commit that work to You, asking that You continue to work in and through the people in this place. Now bless our worship as we prepare for our journey home. Help us to be living sacrifices, pleasing to You as we worship You now and in everyday situations. Equip us to always “be ready” for what is at hand. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Song

Old Testament Lesson: Leviticus 1:1–4

(Guidelines for sacrifices, offerings for atonement)

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 23

(The Shepherd Psalm is a favorite of many. Such a beautiful reminder that we have all we need — our Shepherd supplies everything!)

LEADER: The Lord is my shepherd.

GROUP: I shall not be in want.

LEADER: He makes me lie down in green pastures.

GROUP: He leads me beside quiet waters.

LEADER: He restores my soul.

GROUP: He guides me in paths of righteousness, for His name's sake.

LEADER: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

GROUP: I will fear no evil, for You are with me.

LEADER: Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

GROUP: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

LEADER: You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.

GROUP: Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.

LEADER: And I will dwell in the house of the Lord.

GROUP: Forever!

New Testament Lesson: Romans 12:1–2

(Our offering today: our entire lives, not as “guilt offerings,” as in the Old Testament, but in joyful response to what Jesus has done, and is doing, in our lives)

Confession and Absolution (from Psalm 51, John 3, John 11, and Psalm 103):

LEADER: We have come to the end of another week, Lord.

GROUP: A big week! A week filled with adventure, new friendships. A week filled with hope and anticipation. A week filled with giving, and receiving, Christian love and service. A week in which we have failed to do the good we want to do as Your people.

LEADER: “Seek ye first His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

GROUP: We are seeking Your righteousness, Lord. We want to perfectly love and serve those around us, but other things get in the way!

LEADER: The Psalmist writes, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion, blot out my transgressions.”

GROUP: Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

LEADER: For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

GROUP: Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight. Cleanse me, and I will be clean. Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

LEADER: Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

GROUP: Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me.

LEADER: Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit.

GROUP: You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it.

LEADER: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. We come before You with broken hearts, Lord!

LEADER: Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.”

GROUP: (Shout) **Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life!**

LEADER: He also said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies.”

GROUP: **And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.**

LEADER: He is the sacrifice that removes all our sins. Do you believe this?

GROUP: **Yes, I believe He is the Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world.**

LEADER: Go in peace and joy. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our sins from us. Respond with joy-filled service!

Sharing of Peace

Song of Joy

Gospel: Mark 8:31–38

(Jesus is our ultimate sacrifice. Here He shares how He will be killed, but will rise again. Offering our lives in joyful response to His work means taking up our crosses.)

The Message: “A Week of Service, a Life of Service — Are You Ready?”

Prayers

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

If the Lord’s Supper is to be celebrated, the Words of Institution, the Distribution and songs can be included at this point.

Song of Thanks:

“IN YOU IS GLADNESS” (FOR TUNE, SEE LSB 818)

In You is gladness, amid all sadness,
Jesus, sunshine of my heart.

By You are given the gifts of heaven,
You the true Redeemer are.

Our souls are waking; our bonds are breaking.
Who trusts You surely has built securely,
and stands forever. Alleluia!

Our hearts are pining to see Your shining,
Dying or living to You are cleaving
Now and forever. Alleluia!

If He is ours, we fear no powers,
Not of earth or sin or death.

He sees and blesses in worst distresses;
He can change them with a breath.

Wherefore the story, tell of His glory
With hearts and voices; all heaven rejoices
In Him forever. Alleluia!

We shout for gladness, win over sadness,
Love Him, and praise Him, and still shall raise Him
Glad hymns forever. Alleluia!

Setting: Copyright 1969 Concordia Publishing House

Sending Shout Out:

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I’m ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!

LEADER: Ready for what?

GROUP: To serve and praise God!

LEADER: Service where?

GROUP: Where He leads us.

LEADER: Why and how?

GROUP: He loves, so we love.

LEADER: Ready or not, world,

GROUP: He’s prepared us!

LEADER: Ready and waiting?

GROUP: Watch and pray!

LEADER: Ready to head home?

GROUP: Daily service.

LEADER: What we've learned here

GROUP: Goes home with us!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: Yes, I'm ready!

LEADER: Are you ready?

GROUP: We ARE ready!

LEADER: Go in peace! Serve the Lord!

GROUP: Thanks be to God.

LEADER: The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all — wherever He may send us!

GROUP: Amen. So be it!

Closing Song

