



SERVICE AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant Leaders

May 10, 2025

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Matthew 20:25-28 (CEV) • “But Jesus called the disciples together and said: ‘You know foreign rulers like to order their people around. And their great leaders have full power over everyone they rule. But don’t act like them. If you want to be great, you must be the servant of all the others. And if you want to be first, you must be the slave of the rest. The Son of Man did not come to be a slave master, but a slave who will give his life to rescue many people.’”

Mark 9:33-35 (The Message) • “They came to Capernaum. When he was safe at home, he asked them, ‘What were you discussing on the road?’ The silence was deafening—they had been arguing with one another over who among them was greatest. He sat down and summoned the Twelve. ‘So you want first place? Then take the last place. Be the servant of all.’”

James 1:27 (The Message) • “Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “SERVICE AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP”

As Christians we like the idea of service, but in practice we buy into the world’s values more than into Jesus’ radical value system. Even within the church we tend to practice a worldly model of leadership, sometimes forgetting Jesus’ model of servant leadership. Teens need to know that service is at the heart of the Christian life. It’s not an optional add-on; it’s what the life is all about. Accepting Jesus’ kingdom values means we radically redefine what it means to be a leader, what it means to be a success. In Jesus’ terms, a leader is someone who serves. And success means putting others’ needs ahead of your own wants. In a society that constantly bombards us with the message that we deserve to have all our desires fulfilled, Jesus’ model of service is world changing.

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “SERVICE AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Define in their own words what it means to serve.
2. Understand the biblical model of leadership as service.
3. Generate ideas for practical service on both the group and individual level.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) paper, pencils, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk; (Activity B) paper, pencils, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

Connecting • Bibles, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

Applying • Paper and pencils.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Provide paper and pencils.

Get set • Divide into two groups: one group will title their list poster “Leaders” with people they consider to be leaders, while the other group will title theirs “Servants” listing people they consider servants or pictures of service-related activities. With a large class, divide into several groups of four or five people each, and assign half the groups to do the “Leaders” list and half to do the “Servants” poster list. Alternatively, do the activity with the whole class, listing on the board the students’ answers in two columns—Servants and Leaders.

Go • Allow the groups about five minutes to work on the activity.

Debriefing • **Ask: What’s the difference between a servant and a leader? Can leaders also be servants? Did any of the same people appear on both lists? Can you think of anyone who could fit into both categories? How can a leader be a servant?**

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Pass out paper and pencils to students.

Get set • Ask students to brainstorm a list of the 10 (or more!) jobs they have to do on a regular basis. These can be household chores, yardwork, or any number of other things.

Go • Allow everyone five minutes to make their list. Then **say: Next to each item you’ve listed, put the name of one person for whom you would be willing to do that job if they needed it done—just because you would do it to help them out.** After allowing a few minutes for this, **say: Now go back over your list and circle every item on the list that you would do for money.**

Debriefing • **Ask: What kinds of jobs**

showed up on the lists? (Write some of the more popular choices on the board.) **For each job, were you able to think of someone you'd do it for, or were there jobs you wouldn't do as a favor for anyone? Who were some of the people for whom you'd do an unpleasant job—parents, siblings, best friend, boyfriend, or girlfriend? What items did you circle—things you'd be willing to do for money? Are there things you'd do for money that you wouldn't do as a favor for someone? Are there things you'd do for someone you love that nobody could pay you enough to do otherwise?**

Say: This week's lesson is about service. Serving others sometimes means doing things we don't enjoy, or things that may be hard for us. The motive should be the same as yours was for the people whose names you wrote down—love. We serve others because we love them, and because we love Jesus. Service usually doesn't involve getting paid or rewarded for what we do.

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

If you were to visit Paris, you could see the statues of two men, both named Louis. The first is of Louis XIV, France's absolute monarch, who is remembered today chiefly for his exclamation, "I am the State." He represents one of the supreme achievements of greatness through power. His philosophy of life was that the whole nation and the world, insofar as he could compel it, should serve him. A few blocks away is a less pretentious statue. There is no uniform on this figure carved in stone, no badge of office, no sword, no crown. It is a memorial to Louis Pasteur, the servant of humanity and servant of God. His life of unselfish, devoted research conferred immeasurable benefits upon all humanity in the years to come through overcoming disease and suffering. It is the uncrowned servant of humanity who wears the real crown of people's love and honor. As you look back, would you rather be remembered as Louis XIV, who

became supreme ruler of France and now has just a statue to commemorate him, or Louis Pasteur, who is now commemorated as a messenger of mercy? (From Pulpit Helps Online. Used by permission.)

Ask: Who's the most important person in our church? Is it the pastor? the head elder? the choir director? the beginners Sabbath School teacher? the janitor?

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Most of you would probably pick the pastor or head elder, or someone else with a very high profile. On the other hand, you might say your friend sitting next to you is the most important person in the church—because they are the most important person to you. But who's most important to the church as a whole? Who does God consider most important?

God uses a different standard for judging who's important. He's not impressed by titles, position, or paycheck. In God's view, the work of the janitor is just as important as that of any other person in the church!

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

Serving others is absolutely central to the idea of being part of God's kingdom. He sends us into this world as His citizens—to do the kinds of things Jesus did while He was here on earth. We are Jesus' hands and feet in this world now, and He calls us to help others the way He did.

We all know service is important, but sometimes we push it to the sidelines of the Christian life. It's a nice little extra we'll do if we have time. But in reality, Jesus said it was the only way to become "great" in His kingdom.

Ask: How do you define a “great” Christian or a “great” person? Does your definition involve serving others? How does our society define greatness? Are the people society considers “great” the ones who do the most to serve others?

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath’s section of the lesson.

Ask: In what way is God’s kingdom “upside down” according to our usual values? On a white/chalkboard at the front of the room, write: “God Says You’re a Success if You . . .” Assign class members to read the Bible verses from Wednesday’s section of the student lesson (Acts 6:1-7; Micah 6:8; Ephesians 4:11-16; Matthew 20:25-28; James 1:27; Luke 14:12-14; Matthew 25:40; 1 Corinthians 12:27, 28). After each verse is read, ask class members to put into their own words what that verse says about God’s standard of success, and write it under the heading on the board. When the list is complete, **ask:** How does this list line up with the world’s usual standards for success? Does it line up with what we look for in Christian leaders? Does it line up with the standards we set for our own lives?

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Your pastor stops you after church one day and asks if you’d be willing to serve on a committee with other young people in your church to plan a special activity. Remembering everything you’ve learned in Sabbath School about service, you agree to do it!

When different jobs are being handed out, you’re left with a choice of two jobs to do. One is easy: on the night of the big event, you get to stand up front and introduce the main speaker. You get to dress up, look good, and do practically no work! Everyone will know that you’ve

been part of the team, and they’ll probably thank you for helping out.

The other job is cleaning up the church auditorium after the activity. You’ll have to stay late picking up garbage and sweeping the floor. By the time you’re finished, almost everyone will have gone home, and nobody will know what you did. But the team leader reminds you, “This has to get done! Somebody needs to clean up!”

What’s your choice? Sure, this is an exaggerated example—but often we do choose to do the things that will bring us praise and rewards rather than the harder work that really needs to be done.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Divide the students into small groups and pass out pens and paper to brainstorm some ideas for hands-on service activities that your group could get involved in. The only criteria should be that the project must provide something that people really need, and it should require actual hard work on the part of class members—i.e., while you can certainly have fun doing it, it should take real effort and maybe a little humility.

Debriefing • After allowing about 10 minutes for groups to brainstorm, come back together and have each group report on their ideas. Pick one or two suggestions that seemed to recur and make a plan to implement those service ideas with your group in the next month or so.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What leaders do you know who you would consider to be “servant leaders”?
2. Can something still be considered “Christian service” if you get paid for it? Why or why not?

3. If we're not saved by the good works we do, why does it matter whether we serve others or not?
4. What if the good, useful work you're doing for others is something you really dislike doing? What should you do?
5. Does it matter if you serve others from the wrong motives—say, because you want to look good or impress someone? The work still gets done, doesn't it? How much do motives matter?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words conclude with the following ideas:

"The motive that prompts us to work for God should have in it nothing akin to self-serving. Unselfish devotion and a spirit of sacrifice have always been and always will be the first requisite of acceptable service. Our Lord and Master designs that not one thread of selfishness shall be woven into His work. Into our efforts we are to bring the tact and skill, the exactitude and wisdom, that the God of perfection required of the builders of the earthly tabernacle; yet in all our labors we are to remember that the greatest talents or the most splendid services are acceptable only when self is laid upon the altar, a living, consuming sacrifice" (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 65).

Serving others isn't an option for Christians. It's a requirement. This world puts a lot of emphasis on power, money, looks, possessions. But in God's kingdom, only one thing matters—how much you're willing to do for others.



STUDENT LESSON

SERVICE AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “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?” (Micah 6:8, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 17, Spiritual Gifts and Ministries:** “God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts that each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 79-81

SERVANT LEADERS

Moses is the preeminent figure in the Old Testament. Naturally shy and humble, he sought obscurity. But when the Lord called him to rescue the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, this man of faith revealed the courage, tenacity, and moral convictions of a true hero. Although Moses would reveal great flaws more than once, he was the great spiritual leader of his people.

Moses barely survived infancy. Threatened by the growing number of Israelites in Egypt, the pharaoh issued a decree to kill all male Hebrews under 2 years old. Moses' mother hid her child. She placed him in an “ark of bulrushes” and “laid it in the reeds by the river’s bank” (Exodus 2:3,

NKJV). Miraculously, the pharaoh’s daughter discovered the crying baby. Moses’ sister, Miriam, watching the child from a distance, offered her mother’s assistance in raising Moses.

Moses’ mother raised him his first 12 years. He was then educated in the pharaoh’s royal school. We might reasonably assume Moses was given the best possible education in reading, writing, history, geography, political science, management, leadership—lessons he used well when he later led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage.

God brought victory out of defeat through one faithful, humble, godly man. Moses prefigures Christ. In the New Testament, Jesus is the Moses of His people. He is the deliverer. He is the mighty conqueror. He is the one who will lead us to victory. He still turns defeats into victories. He still delivers us from bondage. He still causes us to triumph.

—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 204

Servant leadership is an attribute that both Moses and Jesus displayed in their God-appointed mission. They both refused to adopt the world’s popular model of leadership. Moses and Jesus did not choose the path of fame, popularity, and worldly power. They did not use their influence to build their own earthly kingdoms. Their model of leadership did not have any trace of selfish ambition. In fact, God Himself assigned their mission. Moses was called to deliver the Israelites from their Egyptian captivity. Jesus, the Son of God, was the promised Messiah sent from heaven to deliver the human race from Satan’s captivity.

Moses and Jesus used their influence to lead people to God and to call them to obedience to His commandments. Their lives were marked by renunciation, self-sacrifice, and wholehearted service for the cause of God. Yet their reward was infinitely worth the cost. Through eternal ages the whole universe will witness the transformed lives of the great multitude of human beings who accepted the gift of salvation and will be in God's kingdom. This is the path that marks servant leadership. Are you willing to serve God faithfully and lead others to Him no matter the cost?

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Matthew 23:11, 12.
- » In this year's Student Association elections, three candidates are running. Candidate A, Jim, is an extremely popular student, a star basketball player, active in the church youth group. He's good-looking, and everyone likes him. Candidate B, Michele, is a quiet, studious girl who gets straight As and wants to study law. Of the three of them she seems to really have the best ideas about how student government should work and what she can do to improve the school. Candidate C, Dave, is a nice guy but not a superstar. His grades are good enough to run for president, but not straight As. He has lots of friends, but he's not what you'd call super-popular. Mostly, people know Dave as someone who works hard. He tutors underprivileged kids at a community center after school, he coaches a kids' soccer team for free, and he's gone on two church mission trips and been the hardest-working member of the team.
- » Whom are you going to vote for? What qualities do you think are most important in a leader?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND MINISTRIES

- » Read Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 1 Timothy 3:1-13.
- » God has given each of us gifts to be used to help others, share His message of love, and to glorify Him. God will lead us to people who need help, and it is our job to respond. He has also presented to us traits that will help us be His messengers, reflecting His love to the world.
- » How can you use the gifts God has given you to help others today?

- » Fill in the blanks using the words from the word bank. The texts are from the New King James Version.

all another belong forever
good ministers received speak
glorified supplies

"As each one has _____ a gift, minister it to one _____, as _____ stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him _____ as the oracles of God. If anyone _____, let him do it as with the ability which God _____, that in _____ things God may be _____ through Jesus Christ, to whom _____ the glory and the dominion _____ and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:10, 11).

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read John 13:12-15.
- » How do you feel about serving and helping others? We've been told that we are supposed to help others. But is it something you do from your heart, or is it something you do just because you have been told to do it?

» According to Jesus, it's at the dead center of the Christian life. It's what He's going to be looking for when He comes back again. And it's the only way to get ahead, to really succeed. Jesus isn't going to be interested in impressed by your grades—although doing well in school reflects good discipline and diligence. Neither will He look for your sports trophies, your friends, your clothes, or any selfish pursuit, even your perfect Sabbath School attendance record. Jesus is looking for someone who's willing to get down on their knees, get dirty, and start helping others.

» That's why Jesus did that little object lesson where He got down on His knees and washed the disciples' dirty feet. Nobody else was willing to do it. Jesus showed that a real leader, a real success, a person filled with God's Spirit, is the person who's not afraid to get their hands dirty—serving others.

» "One of the last acts of His [Jesus'] life on earth was to gird Himself as a servant, and perform a servant's part" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 644). "And those who would partake of His [Jesus'] divine attributes, and share with Him the joy of seeing souls redeemed, must follow His example of unselfish ministry" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 651).

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

» Match the verse with the text. All verses are from the New King James Version.

Acts 6:1-7	Ephesians 4:11-16
Micah 6:8	Matthew 20:25-28
James 1:27	Luke 14:12-14
Matthew 25:40	1 Corinthians 12:27, 28

1. "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve . . ."

2. "God has appointed these in the church."

3. "To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly . . ."

4. "Invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind."

5. "Then the word of God spread."

6. "As you did it to one of the least of these . . ."

7. "Unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . ."

8. "Visit orphans and widows in their trouble."

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read Matthew 25:34-40.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Do you see yourself as a leader, or more as a follower? Either way, God is calling you to serve. That means serving Him by serving others. But how do you "serve others"? How do you know what God wants you to do for others?
- » Start looking around you. What are the needs you see in your family, in your school, in your community? Who are the people who need help?
- » Take a look at yourself too. God blessed you with natural talents and abilities, and He'll help those to grow if you give them to Him to serve others. Where can your gifts be used to connect with other people's needs?
- » Remember Jesus washing those disciples' feet. He was becoming a servant in order to serve others. Real service may use your natural gifts and talents, but it will also involve being humble. Not drawing attention to yourself or getting praise for how great you are.

Doing things that may be difficult, that others might not appreciate or understand. And sometimes, it will mean doing things that no one else is willing to do.

- » Serving others brings us closer to Jesus—and to other people too! Start looking for opportunities to answer God’s call to service today.
- » “If we work with wholehearted interest as a follower of Christ, the heart will be in close sympathy with God, and the Spirit of God, moving upon our spirit, will call forth the sacred harmonies of the soul in answer to the divine touch” (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 83).

Friday
APPLYING

- » Read John 13:34, 35.
- » Jesus cared for those around Him and did many wonderful things—He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and raised the dead. We can serve and share Jesus with those around us who are hurting and are in need. Look back

at yesterday’s suggestions for finding ways to serve and help others. Then jot down a few ideas about how God might be calling you to serve others:

- » Needs I see around me:

- » Things I’m good at and enjoy doing:

- » Where do the two connect? (How can I use my gifts to meet others’ needs?)

