

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM
WEEK FOUR: SERVICE
A MORE EXCELLENT WAY



A More Excellent Way: Service

OPENING PRAYER:

Dear Eternal Triune God, we adore the works of your hands. Empower us by your Spirit to do works of piety, mercy, and justice in our homes, churches, and in the world. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

How have you seen God at work this week?

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WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

Read John 6:1-15

“After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?’ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, ‘Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.’ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?’ Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down.’ Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.’ So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, ‘This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.’ When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.”

Additional Scripture Reading: Matthew 14:13-2, Mark 6:30-44, and Luke 9:10-17

REFLECTION:

Recently, Gabrielle (my wife) and I were looking for a new restaurant. We wanted to step outside of our regular restaurant experiences, those places that are in our current rotation of restaurants. We looked for places with top reviews and ratings, via our online search engine. We settled on a Thai restaurant on 28th street in Fort Worth. We arrived at our destination, which was an old strip mall. Immediately, I said “wow this cant be it, right?” There was nothing attractive or good about the structure. We decided to go inside and our experience was phenomenal.

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WEEK FOUR: SERVICE

REFLECTION

The inside of the restaurant was very nice and the food was amazing. The waitress took great care of us. The restaurant manager checked on us multiple times. What we enjoyed best was the service, which was given with a smile. The owners of the restaurant did not have a building with an impressive facade, but they had amazing food and phenomenal service.

When was the last time that you experienced phenomenal service? Most of us have an expectation that when we enter a business establishment, we will receive good service. The more money we spend, the greater our expectation. For example, we don't expect the same level of service at a fast food restaurant that we expect to receive at a five-star restaurant. God expects us to serve and the quality of our service should reflect the size of the God who dwells in our hearts. Therefore, our service is not dependent on our age, gender, or social location. All these things are external factors. Service is an act of grace empowered by the Holy Spirit to do works of piety, mercy, and justice so that more people meet Jesus, are transformed by the Holy Spirit, and experience the liberating, healing and reconciling work of salvation today and eternally. The goal of service should be personal and social holiness.

In John chapter 5, Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath which was against the Jewish law. According to the law, no work was to be done of the Sabbath, and technically healing was work. Moreover, Jesus refers to God as his Father, which makes the Jewish religious establishment even more incensed and increases the desire to kill him. Jesus points out that the love of God does not exist in their hearts. In our text, crowds follow because they heard about his healing ministry. Jesus saw them and he had "compassion" on them. Jesus knew that they came expecting healing or at least be a witness to healing. Jesus was able to assess that they had other needs. He knew they were tired and hungry. Jesus commanded the disciples to feed the people, but the disciples were focused on what they did not have.

Phillip, the disciple, reported to Jesus that there was not enough money in the treasury to feed all 5,000 people. However, Jesus knew the truth that "God is Big Enough." They reported to Jesus that there was a boy with five loaves and two fish. Jesus took them and gave thanks to God for the five loaves and two fish, and by the grace of God, they were able to feed 5,000 people and there were even leftovers. The God who is big enough gave more than enough and a boy, that was willing to share his bread and fish, was able to participate in blessing 5,000 people.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Encounter The Head:

Why is it so difficult to give up what we have in service to others?

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How can we best assess the needs of those whom we are given the opportunity to serve?

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What was the most impactful thing that you learned from the podcast, sermon, sermon discussion guide, or from the scripture?

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Encounter The Heart:

Share a time when you experienced phenomenal service. What made this experience so great?

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Share your experiences of serving others (mission trips, greeting ushering, mentoring, etc.) with the group. What did you learn about God, yourself, and others?

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PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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