



**SESSION**

**5**

**LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY**



**WHAT DO YOU  
LIKE BEST  
ABOUT YOUR  
COMMUNITY?**

?



# THE POINT

LIVING FOR CHRIST MEANS SERVING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

### FACT:

NEARLY 50 PERCENT OF AMERICANS ARE INTROVERTS WHO PREFER SMALLER GROUPS AND ALONE TIME. IT'S WORTH NOTING THAT, BECAUSE OUR SOCIETY GENERALLY CELEBRATES EXTROVERTED BEHAVIORS, INTROVERTS OFTEN FEEL LIKE OUTSIDERS.<sup>1</sup>

Every year all across America, students walk through the doors of a new school for the first day of class. Maybe the family moved, or maybe the new school offers opportunities the old one didn't. Either way, it's natural that anyone in this situation would feel a little uneasy, or even extremely anxious.

### ➤ Describe a time when you felt like an outsider:

In this type of situation, one factor influences our experiences more than anything else: how we're treated by others. Years down the road when we remember a particular place, whether we remember it and smile—or not—depends in a big way on the relationships we had.

If you're not the new kid, then soon enough you'll be the one to welcome someone new. Jesus teaches that our true identity is revealed in the ways we treat others. Just as God recognized and provided for the needs of the lost, His children are continuously aware of the needs of others.

So the next time you see a new student lost in the school halls, help lead him or her in the right direction. This is what Jesus has done for us, and since our identity is in Him, we are to live as He does.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?



## ▶ MATTHEW 25:31-40

<sup>31</sup>“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

<sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

<sup>33</sup>He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on the left.

<sup>34</sup>Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

<sup>35</sup>“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in;

<sup>36</sup>I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited me.’

<sup>37</sup>“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

<sup>38</sup>When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or without clothes and clothe you?

<sup>39</sup>When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?’

<sup>40</sup>“And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

## THE SETTING

Before His crucifixion, the disciples expected Jesus to establish His rule as a victorious King. They thought it would happen very soon, but they wanted to know exactly when, so they asked (Matt. 24:3). Jesus told them that no one knows the day or hour that He would come (Matt. 24:36), but there would be signs. The disciples were to live expectantly awaiting that day, but in the meantime, they were to concern themselves with serving the needs of others.

## ▶ MATTHEW 25:31-33

We all have our favorite movies, and we've likely watched them over and over. On the second viewing, we often pick up on things we didn't notice the first time around. Somehow knowing the ending helps us to appreciate the small things we otherwise miss.

➤ **In your favorite movie, how do small details point toward the end?**

**HOW COULD  
LOOKING TO  
THE END AFFECT  
THE WAY WE  
SEE PEOPLE?**

?

Jesus taught that we should look toward the ending, living in light of eternity and ready for Him to return at any second (Matt. 24:44). To help us grasp this reality, the master storyteller gave us a picture of His second coming.

Shepherds have often kept both sheep and goats, and although in the U.S. they look very different, certain types look so similar that only shepherds can easily tell them apart. One big way is behavioral: sheep tend to follow and goats go their own way. Also, despite both being useful, sheep are generally more highly valued because of their wool.

As a shepherd separates sheep from goats, Jesus told that when He sits on His throne, He will separate all people into two categories. Those who find their identity in Him will be given a place of honor at His right hand.



*“One of the principal rules of religion is, to lose no occasion of serving God. And, since he is invisible to our eyes, we are to serve him in our neighbour; which he receives as if done to himself in person, standing visibly before us.”<sup>2</sup> —John Wesley*

To “lose no occasion” means we should continually serve God. Discuss with the group what this looks like in your everyday life.

## ▶ MATTHEW 25:34-36

In His story, Jesus rewards the sheep because of the ways they treated Him. Jesus said they met His needs in very specific ways, which represent the things we all need to survive and experience a fulfilling life.

- ▶ **Hungry and thirsty:** Food and water are two of our most basic daily needs. Water was sometimes scarce, so sharing this precious commodity was a great act of love.
- ▶ **A stranger:** When a stranger came to town, he had no job or means of supporting himself. They not only gave a dollar to a needy person, but “took Me in.” That’s hospitality that requires a real investment.
- ▶ **Naked:** People often had only one coat, so to clothe someone with no coat meant giving them yours. That’s real sacrifice.
- ▶ **Sick:** If you didn’t work, you didn’t get paid. To care for the sick was to provide care not only for their illness, but also for their daily needs.
- ▶ **In prison:** The first-century jail system provided nothing for the inmates; they just locked them up. Prisoners had to depend on others to bring them food.

We are surrounded by people with real needs. We can’t meet every one, but we’re to be constantly looking for ways to help and be ready to serve when we can.

WHAT KEEPS  
US FROM  
REACHING  
OUT TO THOSE  
WHO NEED  
OUR HELP?

?



# ACTION POINT

One way God has called us to serve Him is through serving the needs of others. And needs come in many shapes and sizes. There are many who are homeless and hungry: these needs are often easy to see. There are other needs that are much more difficult to identify. Finding out if someone is lonely, sad, or struggling at home often requires investing time and building a close relationship. Identify people you know with the following needs: physical, practical, and relational. Write down how you could serve them, then write a prayer that you'll pray on their behalf every day this week.

|                        | PHYSICAL NEED | PRACTICAL NEED | RELATIONAL NEED |
|------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>NAME:</b>           |               |                |                 |
| <b>NEED:</b>           |               |                |                 |
| <b>HOW I'LL SERVE:</b> |               |                |                 |
| <b>PRAYER:</b>         |               |                |                 |

## WITH SO MANY NEEDS, HOW DO WE DECIDE WHOM TO HELP?



### ▶ MATTHEW 25:37-40

In cities and towns all across America, there are people in need. Some of those are on the surface and others are hidden. But Jesus wasn't talking about the needs of the many, He was talking about Himself. Jesus was the one who was hungry. Jesus was thirsty, and sick, and in prison.

When Jesus shared that He'd experienced these hardships, His followers were totally surprised. As hard as they tried, they couldn't remember seeing Jesus struggling in these ways, nor could they remember helping.

They could, however, remember helping many people through the course of their everyday lives. They hadn't worried about whether or not the needy deserved it. They hadn't asked for anything in return. They helped simply because they cared.

#### ➤ Describe a time when you helped someone.

Then Jesus shared an unfathomable truth: when we show love to others in need, we're showing love to Jesus. When we stand before Jesus at the end of the age, those who loved others (and Jesus) will be rewarded, but those who withheld good from the needy will be rejected.

Our identity in Christ is demonstrated in how we love and serve the people around us. Let's serve Jesus by serving others.

*Our identity in Christ is demonstrated in how we love and serve the people around us. Let's serve Jesus by serving others. #ChristID*



## ACTION POINT

In the 2016 live-action version of *The Jungle Book*, Baloo loves honey. But there is a problem. Even though everyone thinks he should be able to climb to the honey high on a ledge, Baloo is afraid of heights and can't bring himself to go get it. Mowgli recognizes Baloo's fear and, in helping him get the honey, becomes his good friend.

We all have strengths and weakness. If we're aware of opportunities to serve others, we can make a big difference in their lives. Make a list of three ways you will serve others this week.





# LIVE IT OUT

**“THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST ARE SHEEP IN THIS RESPECT, THAT THEY LOVE TO GET TOGETHER. SHEEP GO IN FLOCKS, AND SO DO GOD’S PEOPLE.”<sup>3</sup>**

— CHARLES SPURGEON

## BIBLE READING PLAN



### DAY 1

JAMES 1:1-18

### DAY 2

JAMES 1:19-26

### DAY 3

JAMES 2:1-13

### DAY 4

JAMES 2:14-26

### DAY 5

JAMES 3:1-18

### DAY 6

JAMES 4:1-17

### DAY 7

JAMES 5:1-20

## ▶ CHRIST

At the end of the age, we will stand before Jesus to be judged according to the ways we’ve loved and served others. If Jesus observed your life over the past month, what would He say about you? Pray this week for opportunities to serve the “least of these.” Record your ideas and commit to following through.

## ▶ COMMUNITY

We are surrounded by people with real needs. You may know of needy students at your school or there may be a soup kitchen nearby. As a group, discuss how you can minister to needy people in your community, pray for them, and come up with a plan to serve.

## ► CULTURE

Jesus was known to spend time with people who were deemed by society as “unlovable.” Write down your thoughts about who the “least of these” were in Jesus’ time. Identify the “least of these” that can be found in your community. What are the needs of these people? Pray that God would give you a burden to serve the needy, and record how you will commit to ministering to the needs of others.



**LEAST OF THESE**

**NEEDS TODAY**

**HOW I CAN SERVE**