



40 Days of Purpose

Week 5 – Ministry: You Were Shaped for Serving God

Notes: This Bible Study is taken from the 40 Days of Purpose Weekly Lessons guide available from www.purposedriven.com. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

I. INTRODUCTION

Someone once said, “Christians are like fertilizer. Pile them up in one place long enough and they’ll begin to stink. But spread them out and they’ll do some good.”

This week we’re going to talk about the fourth purpose of your life: doing good to others. The Bible calls this ministry. I’d like to begin by reading Jesus’ famous parable of the Good Samaritan. Open your Bibles to Luke 10:30. The background of this story is that a religious man came to Jesus and asked Him a question about who he was responsible to care for. This man was familiar with the Great Commandment, which says we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Trying to limit his responsibility, he asked the question, “Who is my neighbor?” Let’s read the story.

“In reply Jesus said: ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said, “and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.” Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’ The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” Luke 10:30-37 (NIV)

How does reading this story make you feel?

It is easy to feel a twinge of guilt. We have all, at one time or another, passed by someone in need. The needs around us are very overwhelming. Sometimes it leaves us paralyzed

and asking the question, “What are we supposed to do?” This week we’ll look at the answer to that question.

A. Three Attitudes Toward People in Need

In this passage Jesus reveals three attitudes toward people in need.

1. KEEPING MY DISTANCE

What did the first man do who came upon the man who was beaten up?

He crossed over to the other side of the road.

Why did he cross over to the other side of the road?

The first man demonstrated an attitude that is part of a lifestyle of avoidance: “KEEPING MY DISTANCE.” When we’re living this way, we tell ourselves, “Don’t get too close to people; we may have to help them.” We try to keep all relationships superficial. If we keep everyone at arm’s length, we won’t have to get involved and can avoid getting hurt.

There’s a great story about an old man standing on a crowded bus. A young man standing next to him asked, “What time is it?” The old man said nothing. As the young man walked away, the old man’s friend asked, “Why were you so rude to the young man?” The old man answered, “If I had given him the time of day, he’d want to know where I am going. Then we might talk about our interests. If we did that, he might invite himself to my house for dinner. If he came to my house, he would meet my lovely daughter. If he met her, they would both fall in love and frankly, I don’t want my daughter marrying someone who can’t afford a watch.”

Does modern society make it hard or easy to live a lifestyle of avoidance?

We live in a world of people who don’t want to be bothered. In recent years a phenomenon known as “cocooning” has developed. This is an increasing desire to isolate ourselves. It’s possible—and common—to drive into your gated community right past your neighbors, hit the garage door opener, pull your vehicle into your garage and enter your house directly from the garage, never speaking to another

person. We now bank from home, communicate through email, shop online, get dinner at a drive-up window, and when we finally use the phone we talk to an automated system.

Why has our society developed into one which facilitates lifestyles of avoidance?

If I keep my distance, I don't have to see or be confronted with the pain and needs of those around me... out of sight, out of mind.

2. CURIOUS BUT UNINVOLVED

What did the second man do who came upon the robbery victim?

The same thing only there is a difference, in this case, the Levite came to the place and saw him. In the first case, the priest only saw him. So the Levite demonstrated curiosity by getting a better look at the victim.

How did the attitude of the Levite compare to that of the priest?

In a way, the attitude of the Levite was worse than the priest. In the first attitude we "see." In this second attitude, we acknowledge the need through our curiosity, but we don't do anything to help. So, the Levite demonstrated an attitude of **"CURIOUS BUT UNINVOLVED"**.

Where have you seen this attitude demonstrated on the Southwest Freeway?

Rubber neckers... Most traffic jams are caused by people on the other side of the road wanting to see what happened in an accident, but who have no intention of stopping to help.

3. Treating Others How I Want TO BE TREATED

What did the Samaritan do when he came upon the victim?

He took pity on the victim and helped him.

What attitude did the Samaritan demonstrate?

The Samaritan demonstrated an attitude of treating others the way I want to be **"TO BE TREATED."** God has called every Christian to have the attitude of the good Samaritan. Serving and following Christ go hand in hand.

B. Four Steps to Serving the Needs of People the Way Jesus Would

Let's spend some time looking at some practical steps each of us can take to become a true servant of Christ and others. In this passage we find four steps to serving on purpose:

1. START SEEING the Needs of People Around Me.

Where did the opportunity to do good begin for the three men who came upon the victim in Luke 10:30-37?

Kindness always begins in the eyes. You have to see the need first. You can't care until you are aware. The Bible tells us all three men "saw" the guy in need. So, in order to serve people the way Jesus did, we need to **START SEEING** the needs of people around me.

How does our modern society put us at a disadvantage for serving others?

In some ways, the men in the Good Samaritan story are ahead of us because we often don't even see the need. Modern society makes it possible for us to move so fast through life that we literally miss seeing the needs of others.

Where can we find people in need of rescue?

There are wounded people all around us. We just don't see them. They may not have been physically beaten or bruised, but they have been beaten by life and bruised by circumstances.

Why don't we see the needs of people around us?

Busyness... being in a hurry is the death of kindness.

An illustration is in order here... If are taking a trip and really want to see the country, which would be the best form of transportation: travel by plane, train, car, or on a bicycle?

The slower we go, the more we see. To be sensitive and see needs up close, you must slow down.

So how may we be more sensitive to the needs of others?

Slow down long enough to see people; look them in the eye. Give someone your undivided attention. Stop to talk to someone. Put up your spiritual radar: look for clues that indicate what is going on behind the façade.

What does 1 Corinthians 10:24 have to say about how we may serve the needs of others the way Jesus would?

1 Corinthians 10:24 (NLT) - *"Don't think only of your own good. Think of other Christians and what is best for them."*

Here's the first step to serving effectively: Ask God to give you spiritual radar. Some people are born sensitive and others require extra effort. Start by seeing the needs of people around you.

2. SYMPATHIZE with People's Pain.

What is this next step in helping others? How did the Samaritan respond to seeing the wounded man?

It's not enough just to see others' needs; I must feel their emotions, too. Luke 10:33 says when the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he had pity on him. The Bible says we are to *"weep with those who weep."* Romans 12:15 (TEV) Share in others' sorrows. So, we should SYMPATHIZE with people's pain.

What was significant about the fact that it was a Samaritan who helped the wounded man?

It would be hard for us to grasp how much Samaritans and Jews hated each other. They were divided by race, religion, and politics. Jesus making the Samaritan the hero of the story was an absolute shocker.

What does this tell us about how can we increase our capacity to sympathize with others?

We must first give up our prejudices and stop making assumptions about others. We must begin to see the people around us as Jesus sees them. That homeless person matters to God. That obnoxious person in your office matters to God. That family member who is hard to love matters to God. If you want to be a true servant you must care about what God cares about, and He cares about people.

What must we do if we are to sympathize with others?

In order to sympathize with others we must learn to really listen. We sympathize with our ears. Sometimes the greatest way to serve someone is just listening. Behind every need is a story.

In Luke 10, the priest did not bother to hear the victim's story so he had to make assumptions about how he came to be robbed and beaten. How might the priest have rationalized that the man did not deserve to be helped?

He could have surmised that the man brought this on himself or shouldn't have been so careless. Galatians 6:2 (Msg.) says, *"Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law."*

How does God use our difficulties in life to make us more sympathetic with others in need?

You may have never thought about this, but God has allowed certain struggles in your life so you can sympathize with and serve the people around you. 2 Corinthians 1:4 (NLT) says, *"He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us."*

3. SEIZE the Moment and Meet the Need.

Once the Samaritan man saw the need and sympathized with the pain of the robbery victim, what did he do next?

In Luke 10:34 the Samaritan man takes action. Love is not so much something you feel, as it is something you do. The Samaritan stooped down and got on the man's level. He didn't act superior. He used what he had: wine to disinfect, oil to soothe. The Samaritan probably used his own clothes to bandage this guy's wounds. He didn't wait for a professional.

So the next step to serving the needs of people the way Jesus would is to SEIZE the Moment and Meet the Need.

Don't wait, delay, or procrastinate. Do what you can at that moment.

What does Proverbs 3:27-28 have to say about when we should help those in need?

Proverbs 3:27-28 (Msg) - *"Never walk away from someone who deserves help; your hand is God's hand for that person. Don't tell your neighbor, 'Maybe some other time' or, 'Try me tomorrow,' when the money's right there in your pocket."*

Don't wait for better conditions. Meet the need now.

What implications does seizing the moment have for our plans?

In order to seize the moment, we must be willing to be interrupted. Love is often inconvenient. Serving takes time. We must be ready to set aside our agenda to take advantage of opportunities to help others.

What kind of excuses could the Samaritan have given to avoid seizing the moment to help the robbery victim?

The Samaritan could have thought: "I've got my own problems to think about." "I've got important business to attend to." "He's probably already dead. He's beyond help."

In Luke 10, what is the significance of the phrase, "*a priest happened to be going down the road*?"

The priest just "happened" to be passing by. What often seems like chance is a God-engineered encounter. God intentionally places people in your path; they are divine appointments.

Why don't people respond to God-given opportunities and seize the moment to help others?

In order to seize the moment, we must be willing to risk. To be a servant you must move against your fears.

What kind of fears might the Samaritan have faced?

What if the robbers are still in the area? What if it's a trap and he's faking it? What if he rejects my help? What if I can't really help him? We often don't want to get involved with other's pain and brokenness because it reminds us of our own.

4. SPEND whatever it takes.

Serving begins with seeing the need, sympathizing with others' pain, and taking action... Is this easy to do?

No, it is not easy because it comes with a cost. There is always a cost to kindness and service. It usually requires a sacrifice of time, energy, money, or reputation.

So the fourth step to serving the needs of people the way Jesus would is to SPEND whatever it takes.

What did it cost the Samaritan to help the robbery victim?

Look at verse 34 and 35. We find that the Samaritan took the injured man to an inn. He likely had to walk a great distance. He nursed him through the night, provided for his care, and then paid the bill—all at his own personal expense. He didn't just call 911 from his cell phone. He did all he could to help with no expectation of compensation...

Galatians 6:10 (NIV) - *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."*

APPLICATION

Author Susan Kidd writes of her experience meeting a need:

"It happened years ago on one of those raw December days that make people wish they had done their Christmas shopping in July. Snow flaked winds whipped through the streets. Hunched on a sidewalk bench sat an unshaven man. He wore a threadbare jacket and shoes with no socks. He had folded a paper bag around his neck to keep out the biting wind.

"A shopper paused, saddened by the man. *Such a pity*, she thought. But there was really nothing she could do. While the shopper lingered, a little girl, 11 or 12, walked by and spotted the frostbitten figure on the bench. Wrapped around the girl's neck was a bright woolen scarf. She stopped beside the old man, unwrapped her red scarf and draped it tenderly around his neck, and walked away. The man rubbed the warm wool. And the shopper crept away, wishing she had been the one to give the scarf. I was that shopper. And God taught me something that day. Wherever I am, whatever I possess, there is always something I can give: a touch, a smile, a prayer, and a kind word—even a scarf."

Here's a very personal question: Did you walk past someone in need this week? Maybe you didn't know they were in need because their pain was not physical. And maybe you were too busy to stop and find out how things were going.

As we close, let's get practical. How can we apply this message?

Take a step of action by getting involved in a ministry in our church. I'm sure there are many places of need here that are being overlooked. Stop and consider what gifts and talents you have that our church needs and could use.

What kinds of things can we do as a group to help someone in need in our church?

As a class, take a few minutes to discuss a project or ministry you could serve in together to meet a need in your church. Commit to ask your pastor or someone else in leadership about any unmet needs your class could meet.

Here are some further discussion questions:

- Why, in your opinion, do many people walk right by opportunities to serve others?
- To be a servant you must move against your fears. What personal fears keep you from serving others or meeting needs in your church family?
- You were challenged in this lesson to get very practical. Take a minute and write down some of your gifts and talents. Briefly share them with the class and have the class respond with possible areas of ministry where your gifts would be effective.

Let's pray...

Dear God, thank You for giving us a clear picture of what a servant is like. Father, we don't want to be distant or apathetic people. We really want to be more loving. Help us take these four steps toward developing a servant's heart. Help us to slow down and start seeing and sensing the needs of people around us. Help us to be a better listener so we can sympathize with people. And when interruptions come, help us to see them as opportunities to serve. Help us be willing to take risks and move against our fears in order to help others. Starting today, we are making ourselves available to be used to show your kindness and love to others.

I encourage you to join us next week as we look at the last of God's five purposes for your life.