

SESSION 7

SERVE

AS GOD'S PEOPLE, we are called to work for the good of all—for both the world and the church alike. We work for the good of the world by fulfilling our role as salt and light so that our good works will lead others to give glory to God. We work for the good of the church by taking care of each other so that we might be strengthened for our involvement in God's mission of seeking and saving the lost.

STEPS TO PREPARE

1. Read the main passages for this study, recording your insights and questions:
 - ▷ Matthew 5:13-16
 - ▷ Acts 2:43-47
 - ▷ Galatians 6:10
2. Review the Teaching Plan (pp.72-75).
 - ▷ Refine the lesson plan based on your group's particular needs.
 - ▷ Adjust the plan if necessary.
3. Study the Expanded Lesson Content (pp.76-81).
 - ▷ Determine what elements of this lesson are most applicable to your particular group.
 - ▷ Consider ways to personalize the lesson content for you and your class.
4. Pray for the Lord's guidance as you lead your group through this material.

LESSON OUTLINE

GOD'S PEOPLE WORK FOR...

1. *The good of all who believe (Gal. 6:10).*
2. *The good of the world (Matt. 5:13-16).*
3. *The good of their church (Acts 2:43-47).*

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TEACHING PLAN

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CONNECT

OPTION 1

Begin with officials being a third team on the basketball court with a specific mission. Explain the three types of officials and transition to the comparison between officials and the church (p.76).



Do you typically view sports officials or judges in a favorable or an unfavorable light? Why? How does this compare with the way people view the church?

OPTION 2

For this option, show students the Liberty Mutual “Pay it Forward” commercial (you can find this online). After showing them the video, ask them the following questions before moving to the transition part of the session.



What was interesting about the video to you? What do you think is good and/or bad about the video? What do you think motivated people to do those things? When have you ever had someone randomly help you out in a situation? When have you ever helped someone? How important do you think serving others is to the Christian life? Explain.

TRANSITION

In this lesson, we are going to learn that as God’s people, we are called to work for the good of all—for both the world and the church alike. We work for the good of the world by fulfilling our role as salt and light so that our good works will lead others to give glory to God. We work for the good of the church by taking care of each other so that we might be strengthened for our involvement in God’s mission of seeking and saving the lost.

NOTES:

CONVEY**GOD'S PEOPLE WORK FOR...****1. THE GOOD OF ALL WHO BELIEVE.**

Lead a volunteer to read Galatians 6:10. Set the context for this verse. Then explain how relationships within the body of Christ help support our mission to those outside the body (p.77).



At this point, consider using the story “Working for Good” in the Personal Study Guide (p.63) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



What are some practical ways we can do good to all?



How might we do good works especially for those in the church?

Show how we must resist the tyranny of the urgent so we can see our opportunities to work for the good of all. These opportunities will resemble the “one another” statements in the New Testament (p.78).

2. THE GOOD OF THE WORLD.

Read Matthew 5:13-16, and set its context in the Sermon on the Mount. Describe the church as the salt of the earth with the purposes to preserve and to season this world (p.78).



At this point, consider using the story “Witness for Christ” in the Personal Study Guide (p.65) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



How do your actions contribute to preserving and seasoning God's creation for the good of the world?

Describe the church as the light of the world reflecting Jesus Christ. Emphasize that the more humble the messengers of the gospel are, the more radiant the light of the gospel shines (p.79).



What are some specific ways Christians can hide their light before people? What are some specific ways Christians can let their light shine?



Why might Christians strive to hide their light rather than share it?

WORKING FOR GOOD

When I was a teenage girl, I went through a pretty rough time. I felt very alone, isolated, and sad. But in His goodness, the Lord sent me a precious friend. As our friendship grew, our relationship with Christ grew as well. We were able to point one another to the Savior. To this day, she is my dearest and closest friend. As believers, we are called to come alongside one another and serve each other in love. Through serving each other, we display the goodness of God to those around us. Let us each strive to work for the good of those who are of the family of faith.

► How are you serving fellow believers?

WITNESS FOR CHRIST

Many years ago, my husband served at a church with a vibrant ESL ministry. One morning my husband was praying about what to do with his spare microwave. Later that day, he ended up connecting with a foreign student and gave him the microwave. Giving the man a microwave opened the door for my husband to begin a friendship and share the gospel. As believers, we are called to be the salt and light of the world. Though we can be a witness simply by the way we relate to one another, that isn't enough. We must also speak the truth of the gospel to the world.

► Do you take the call to be salt and light seriously? Explain.

SURROUNDED BY GOD'S PEOPLE

A few years ago, I had to have emergency surgery. All throughout that experience, I was surrounded by the body of Christ. Every day I was in the hospital, people stopped by to see me and bring my husband food. When I got home from the hospital, our house was full of food. Without us even knowing it, our church had organized meals to be brought to us during my recovery. Although my surgery experience was by no means enjoyable, it was a huge blessing to see the body of Christ at work caring for me and my husband. As we care for one another within the church, we provide a reflection of Christ on earth.

► Is your life marked by a love and care for God's people? Why or why not?

NOTES:

3. THE GOOD OF THEIR CHURCH.

Read Acts 2:43-47. Note that the wonders and signs of the apostles attracted attention, but we must not overlook nor underestimate the attractive power of living in a community as new creations. Our gathering together and serving one another in the pattern of Acts 2 is evidence to a watching world of our divine encounter with Christ (p.80).



At this point, consider using the story “Surrounded by God’s People” in the Personal Study Guide (p.67) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



How can we know when we are fulfilling our calling to care for each other in the power of the Spirit? How can we know when we are failing?

Explain the idea behind “all things in common” and the love that should mark us as citizens of the kingdom of heaven (pp.80-81).



How can we show love to brothers and sisters in difficult circumstances?



What thoughts and attitudes of the heart might confront our obedience to God’s call for us to be fully devoted to one another?

COLLIDE

As we begin the second unit of our study, you'll notice the shift that has taken place from talking about the nature of the church in Unit 1—who and what the church is—to how the church lives and operates in Unit 2. This pattern of the church's identity to its mission is important since the latter naturally follows the former. In other words, who the church is in Christ will determine how the church lives in the world today.



What is the connection between identity and behavior? If the latter follows the former, how important is it to get the first one right?

The apostle Paul frequently used this pattern in his letters to churches. He would often start by highlighting a doctrinal truth and reality (ex. the atonement of Christ) and would say, based upon this truth, believers should live like the following... By doing so, Paul is pointing to the rationale for why one should live a certain way.

The same is happening here. Starting in this session we are beginning to show students the reasons for why the people that comprise the church live the way that they do. Show students that there are biblical reasons for why Christians are to live differently than the culture around them.

Showing students the reasons for why they believe what they believe is important for their spiritual growth and maturity. In this session, we get to show them the biblical reasons of why Christians should live in service to others. By doing so, we not only combat the consumerist mentality that is prevalent in our churches, but we make much of Christ by teaching our students that the One who came to serve us now commissions us to go and serve others.



How has this session challenged you in your interactions with others? How will you start to live differently as a result?



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
 **MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject**

NOTES:

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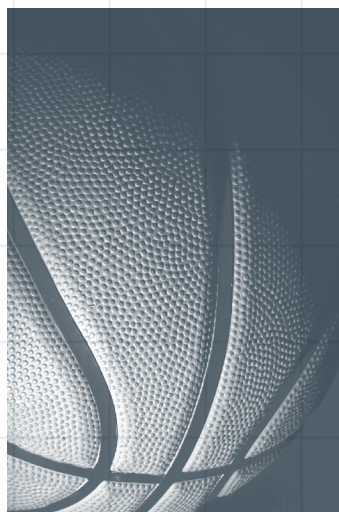
by Walter Strickland

EXPANDED LESSON CONTENT

SERVE

GOD'S PEOPLE WORK FOR THE GOOD OF ALL WHO BELIEVE, THE GOOD OF THE WORLD, AND THE GOOD OF THEIR CHURCH.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION AND DISCUSSION STARTER



In professional basketball there are two opposing teams on the court, but a third team is often overlooked—the officials. The third team is unique because it is not loyal toward either team on the court; the allegiance of the officials is to another organization—the NBA. The officials cannot be persuaded by the crowd, the players, or the coaches; they have their own source of authority, the rule book that comes directly from the league office. This third team does not sit idly by during heated contests but engages in the game to ensure that the wishes of the league come about.¹

And like the officials in the NBA, the church is of a different kingdom. We too participate in a battle, but for the hearts of humankind and the restoration of God's created order.

Generally speaking, there are three kinds of officials. The first type frustrates the progress of the game by continuously calling fouls. The second is a chameleon who is more concerned with not interrupting the game than representing the league that has commissioned him. The church is called to be like a third type of official, not simply pointing out shortcomings, nor blending in, but doing the work of being salt and light in the world for the good of all people, both inside and outside of the church. The tendencies of the church are much like the first two types of officials—to be a nuisance to the world or to pull away completely—but the gospel demands our engagement in the world for the glory of God.

Furthermore, there is a unique camaraderie among officials due to their shared identity and unique commission given by the NBA, especially in the midst of difficult games. The church, like the officials, has been given the wonderful responsibility of taking care of one another as well as the sometimes difficult task of influencing those around them.

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

Many Christians would prefer to hear 'What a great guy' from the crowd rather than 'Well done, good and faithful servant' from the Master.²

—Billy Graham



Do you typically view sports officials or judges in a favorable or an unfavorable light? Why? How does this compare with the way people view the church?

GOD'S PEOPLE WORK FOR...

1. THE GOOD OF ALL WHO BELIEVE (GAL. 6:10).

Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith. (Gal. 6:10)



What are some practical ways we can do good to all?

This verse is found at the end of a section in Scripture that builds upon the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23. Notice that a significant implication of the Spirit's fruit is caring for those who are in the body of Christ by not becoming conceited nor provoking or envying each other (5:26). The following verses elaborate upon the theme of building up those in the body of Christ by restoring each other (6:1), carrying one another's burdens (6:2), not thinking too much of ourselves (6:3), and avoiding pride (6:4).

Caring for one another within the body of Christ is not a diversion from the mission of God; it is part and parcel of it. The people of God are a community whose lives are in contrast to those around them. The bold contrast of God's people selflessly loving and caring for one another pleases God and serves as a testimony to others.

In exploring "doing good to one another," Paul highlighted the source of good in us—the Holy Spirit—and offers a portrait of what doing good looks like as believers (Gal. 6:1-4). He was also concerned with our ability to identify opportunities to bless one another when they arise because we are prone to grow tired of doing good (6:9-10).



How might we do good works especially for those in the church?

Paul assumed that doing good to one another is an intentionally pursued act. The day-to-day demands of life continually command our attention, making it difficult to focus on others instead of ourselves. The everyday tasks of doing school work, performing chores, participating in extra curricular activities are ever-present. Because of that, we can easily be blind to opportunities to bless those both inside and outside the church.

Yet even though life and time demands exist in our daily schedule, as Christians we should adjust our lives in order to work for the good of others. And as we identify opportunities to serve each other with renewed focus, we

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

Paul gives precedence to those who are of the household of faith because we are more closely bound to them.³

—Martin Luther

should look for opportunities to exercise the “one another” statements in the New Testament (more on those statements in the next session).

One reason believers show compassion and care for other believers is because it serves as a real manifestation of God’s love to the person who is finding it difficult to sense God’s presence and seek His face in Scripture. This is especially true during intense seasons of suffering and spiritual dryness. Your care and support for another believer might be just what they need to reenergize their desire for the Lord.

2. THE GOOD OF THE WORLD (MATT. 5:13-16).

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by men. “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matt. 5: 13-16)

These verses find their home in the Sermon on the Mount, the first of five major addresses by Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. In this sermon, Jesus was concerned to speak a message of repentance and to highlight the nearness of God’s kingdom (Matt. 4:17). Jesus began His sermon with general qualities of a kingdom citizen in the Beatitudes (5:3-12). Following the Beatitudes, Jesus explained the role of the believer on this earth, and He anchored His encouragement to the church in two significant word pictures—*salt* and *light*.

Salt of the Earth

Before the days of refrigeration, salt was an extremely powerful metaphor because of its multifaceted use. The most common uses of salt were to preserve and to season.

Despite its brokenness, the world has not completely lost its original goodness, and the church is called to preserve and develop the good that God embedded in it by working it, watching over it, and subduing it (Gen. 1:28; 2:15).

One way that humankind preserves God’s creation is by “subduing” it. Subduing the earth has a much wider implication than bringing something into submission; rather, “to subdue” in this sense is to bring forth the richest potential of God’s design. For example, in Genesis 2, God made the animals, but Adam continued the creation process by naming them. God was certainly capable of naming the animals Himself, but He invited Adam to continue the work of developing His creation.⁴

In the same way that God and Adam worked for the flourishing of creation, we also give testimony to God in the things we do.

The second common use of salt is to season. The people of God are called to “season” the earth with the fragrance of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15). God has given

all of humanity a yearning for Himself. All people long for divine character traits such as justice and mercy to fill the earth. As Christians, “little Christs,” the church has been given the responsibility and has been empowered by the Holy Spirit to make much of God both inside and outside of the church.



How do your actions contribute to preserving and seasoning God's creation for the good of the world?

Light of the World

Changing metaphors, verse 14 declares that Christ-followers are the light of the world. The Christian is like the light that is put on a lampstand because we should not be hidden. But unlike a flame that produces its own light, believers simply reflect the light of Christ because He is the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5).

Christ-followers are humble vessels that carry a profound message. Paul stated:

For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves because of Jesus. For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us. (2 Cor. 4:5-7)

Paul intentionally described a common vessel (jars of clay) to highlight the contrast between the value of the messenger and the all-surpassing greatness of the message that we carry. The implication is that the vessel should not distract from or add to the content it carries.

Let’s not be like those in Genesis 11 who sought desperately to “make a name for [them]selves” with the gifts that God gave them. Instead, we should remain humble, as Paul states in 2 Corinthians, since God’s strength is made perfect in the weakness of His people (12:9). The more humble the messengers of the gospel are, the more radiant the light of the gospel shines.



What are some specific ways Christians can hide their light before people? What are some specific ways Christians can let their light shine?



Why might Christians strive to hide their light rather than share it?

FURTHER COMMENTARY

Salt has many uses, but in the OT it is most often a purifying agent (Ex. 30:35; Lev. 2:13; 2 Kings 2:21; Ezek. 16:4). As the salt of the earth, Jesus' disciples are to purify a corrupt world through their example of righteous living and their proclamation of the gospel. However, contaminated salt does not promote purity. The verb translated 'lose its taste' indicates foolish and immoral behavior. It refers to a professing disciple whose unrighteous lifestyle promotes destruction rather than purification. Such salt is only good for spreading over ground where you want to kill vegetation. Such is the fatal effect of an unrighteous disciple's lifestyle. Nothing grows where they go. 'You are the light of the world' is an allusion to Isaiah 9:1-2; 42:6; 49:6—texts that describe the ministry of Messiah, Servant of the Lord. This indicates that Jesus' disciples are to be extensions of His ministry, carrying salvation to the ends of the earth. Such ministry is intrinsic to true discipleship. A disciple should no more conceal his righteousness or the gospel message than a glowing city should douse its light at night. The reference to giving light for all combines with the reference to the world to show that Christ's ministry is intended for all people. This anticipates the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20.⁵

—Charles L. Quarles

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

Let the light of thy good works shine before men, and let not Christ be blasphemed on thy account.⁶

—Cyril of Jerusalem

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

Luke makes it clear that the experience of forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit led the believers to embrace a radical generosity that put the needs of others before their own... Because of Christ, people suddenly became far more important than earthly treasures.⁷

—Andy Chambers

3. THE GOOD OF THEIR CHURCH (ACTS 2:43-47).

Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude, praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved. (Acts 2:43-47)

Acts 2 is the record of the visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit coming to God's people: first, with tongues of fire (v. 3); second, by men speaking in different tongues, or languages (v. 4); last, with the gathered body of believers.

Verse 43 records that everyone was watching the wonders and signs that the apostles were performing. The original language makes it clear that *everyone* was not simply those who were believers, but the entire community was watching for evidence of the presence of God among His people. Although today's church does not have the uninterrupted gaze of the world, there are still people who are watching the church for evidence of God's existence.

Christians today often look upon the apostles, who were empowered by Jesus to do wonders and signs, with envy. It is common for us to think that if we could do miracles, then the world would watch us too. The people of God, though, have often overlooked or underestimated the power of living in a community as new creations.

Human nature without Christ is selfish and destructive. These negative qualities of fallen humanity are amplified in a group setting. In contrast, when those who are alive in Christ meet in the type of gathering we read of in Acts 2, it is evidence that the people have had a divine encounter because their actions are peppered (or salted) with mercy and grace.



How can we know when we are fulfilling our calling to care for each other in the power of the Spirit? When we are failing?

In the Book of Acts, the concept of togetherness has significance that stretches far beyond proximity. Being together was an outward sign of unity that is far more than meeting together to sit under the apostles' teaching a few times a week. In essence, holding "all things in common" implies that the assets God entrusted to an individual become resources for the entire group. In a real sense, God has provided for everyone who is in need within the church, but He may not have given to each individual family as they have need.

In a nation driven by consumerism, individualism, and the myth of the self-made man/woman, these words are likely to set off alarms for our sinful nature. But those who claim their primary citizenship in the kingdom of

heaven should be marked by the sign of the kingdom—love for one another consistent with the self-giving love of Christ (John 13:34-35). The testimony of an otherworldly unity forced those who were not in Christ to admit that God was up to something among the Christians, and “every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).



What are some ways we can show love to brothers and sisters in difficult circumstances?



What thoughts and attitudes of the heart might confront our obedience to God's call for us to be fully devoted to one another?

CONCLUSION

As history has unfolded, the church has swung back and forth on the pendulum of being evangelistically oriented to being focused on those within the church. At present, there is a renewed excitement within the church to be a people about the mission of God, often referred to as being *missional*. But in order to refrain from swinging violently on the pendulum, believers must remember that the people of God are called to serve all people in every area, especially those within the family of God.

The calls to serve the world and the church are not mutually exclusive. Scripture indicates that by observing Christians serve one another, the watching world observes a preview of the coming Kingdom. Our mission is most effectively fulfilled when those in the church serve one another first and then set our sights on the rest of the world.

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

Churches centered on Jesus constantly remind their people how Christ has served and continues to serve them. And this becomes the one, the only, the supreme impetus for serving others.⁸

—Matt Chandler, Josh Patterson, and Eric Geiger

REFERENCES

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2. Billy Graham, in *Billy Graham in Quotes*, eds. Franklin Graham with Donna Lee Toney (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 307.
3. Martin Luther, *First Lectures on Galatians*, quoted in *Galatians, Ephesians*, ed. Gerald L. Bray, vol. X in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2011), 217.
4. Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor* (New York: Dutton, 2012), 57, 61.
5. Charles L. Quarles, *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 1619, n. 5:13; n. 5:14–16.
6. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XV.26, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol. 7, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1894; reprinted 2004), 112.
7. Andy Chambers, *Exemplary Life* (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 75.
8. Matt Chandler, Josh Patterson, and Eric Geiger, *Creature of the Word* (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 81.