

*Teaching the Bible with  
Children, Youth and Families*

**UNIT 2:  
Service and  
Learning**

-Session 4-

**Serve to Learn. Learn to Serve.**

**Select Learning**

# **FACILITATOR GUIDE**

## **Serve to Learn. Learn to Serve**

### **Gathering Table**

Place on the gathering table an open Bible and some objects that may be used in a service project: a small shovel, work gloves, a rake, or any other objects that might bring to mind a service project.

### **1. Welcome, Introductions and Opening Prayer**

**2. Introduce the Video** – Guests: Dr. David Ellingson and Mark Jackson, Trinity Lutheran College, Everett, Washington

Previous sessions in this unit have provided opportunities to explore the power of biblical stories and why service and mission experiences are essential to the Christian faith. This session introduces “how” to make the connection between the biblical stories and service experiences through an intentional process called service learning. As you watch this segment, consider:

- How has the Bible “come alive” for you through service?
- What makes a service experience meaningful and lasting?
- In what ways might your congregation increase the connection between acts of service and exploring biblical stories?

### **3. Watch the Video**

### **4. Discussion**

Dave begins the video segment by saying “The Bible is boring.” To be sure, he doesn’t believe the content itself is boring, but rather our approach to teaching and engaging biblical stories is often dull.

In small groups, discuss:

Do you agree that the Bible is often taught in a boring fashion? In what ways has the Bible “come alive” for you? What has been most helpful for you in learning biblical stories and themes?

### **5. Exercise**

Mark introduces the concept of service learning, an intentional process through which service and mission experiences can be shaped to effectively teach and engage biblical stories. He and Dave then give two specific examples: teaching about caring for Creation and valuing the wisdom of elders. The following exercise will provide the opportunity to connect a service experience with a familiar Bible story – the story of the Good Samaritan – utilizing the service learning process.

In small groups (4-6 participants):

- Read Luke 10:25-37 out loud.
- What might be a central teaching point of this passage? (There are likely many, but just pick one.)
- Using the outline below, create a service experience that utilizes the service learning process that might be used to bring this Bible story to life. (Some examples are given. Choose those that are pertinent to your project, or add other elements you would find meaningful. Be creative!)

**Service/Mission Experience Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Preparation:**

- Share previous service experiences
- Discuss personal/group expectations
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Build a sense of community
- Read and discuss the Bible story

**Action:**

- Orient group to the site/project
- Reintroduce the biblical story
- Begin the reflection process
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Explore the community context
- Listen to stories of others

**Reflection:**

- Engage small group conversations
- Reflect using creative methods (art, music, photos, poetry, etc.)
- Reconnect to the biblical story
- Consider how the group was equally served or blessed
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Invite written journal reflections

**Celebration:**

- Share the experience with others
- Share reflections on the biblical story (including artistic/creative ways)
- Write a letter to a legislator about the issues you encountered
- Continue the service experience
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Continue the reflection process

**Sharing**

Allow time for some of the groups to share with the large group (a) a central teaching point they identified for the passage, and (b) 2-3 specific ideas demonstrating how the service learning process can be used to creatively teach and engage the Bible story in a meaningful way.

In the large group, ask for several responses about the degree to which the service learning process might provide a richer or deeper meaning to the story of the Good Samaritan.

## 6. Making it My Own—Take it Home

As Mark shared in the video, three questions (What? So What? Now What?) focus and deepen reflection and help young people internalize an active-learning, Bible-centered experience. With one other person, share your reflections on these three questions:

- a. **What?** What (if anything) from today’s conversation did you find interesting?
- b. **So What?** In what ways has this session challenged your thinking about approaches to teaching the Bible? Your understanding of service?
- c. **Now What?** How do you intend to use what you’ve learned in this session in your day-to-day life or within your congregation? (For example: how you read the Bible, interact with others, or lead service projects at your church.)

## 7. Closing

## 8. Extend the Conversation

- Read Exodus 7:14-18 and Luke 4:16-19. Using the template above, create a service experience that gives meaning to these passages. (Hint: Think about the possibilities related to prison ministry, human rights advocacy, or human trafficking.)
- Discuss specific ways in which an existing service project at your church (e.g., church cleanup day, quilt making, or a canned food drive) can be deepened by using the four-step service learning process.

## Accompanying this Session

- Participant Guide
- Bibliography and Resources

**PARTICIPANT GUIDE**  
**Serve to Learn. Learn to Serve**

**1. Welcome, Introductions and Opening Prayer**

**2. Prepare to Watch the Video** – Guests: Dr. David Ellingson and Mark Jackson

- How has the Bible “come alive” for you through service?
- What makes a service experience meaningful and lasting?
- In what ways might your congregation increase the connection between acts of service and exploring biblical stories?

**3. Watch the Video**

**4. Discussion**

Do you agree that the Bible is often taught in a boring fashion? In what ways has the Bible “come alive” for you? What has been most helpful for you in learning biblical stories and themes?

**5. Exercise**

The following exercise will provide the opportunity to connect a service experience with a Bible story – the story of the Good Samaritan – utilizing the service learning process.

In small groups:

- Read Luke 10:25-37 out loud.
- What might be a central teaching point of this passage? (There are likely many, but just pick one.)
- Using the outline below, create a service experience that utilizes the service learning process that might be used to bring this Bible story to life. (Some examples are given. Choose those that are pertinent to your project, or add other elements you would find meaningful. Be creative!)

**Service/Mission Experience Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Preparation:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Share previous service experiences  | <input type="checkbox"/> Build a sense of community       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss personal/group expectations | <input type="checkbox"/> Read and discuss the Bible story |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                        |   |

**Action:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Orient group to the site/project | <input type="checkbox"/> Explore the community context |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reintroduce the biblical story   | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to stories of others   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Begin the reflection process     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                     |  |

**Reflection:**

- Engage small group conversations       Invite written journal reflections
- Reflect using creative methods (art, music, photos, poetry, etc.)
- Reconnect to the biblical story
- Consider how the group was equally served or blessed
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Celebration:**

- Share the experience with others       Continue the reflection process
- Share reflections on the biblical story (including artistic/creative ways)
- Write a letter to a legislator about the issues you encountered
- Continue the service experience
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sharing**

- Hear specific ideas other groups came up with to creatively teach and engage this particular Bible story.
- To what degree is the service learning process helpful in giving a richer or deeper meaning to the story of the Good Samaritan?

**6. Making it My Own—Take it Home**

This is your time to review and plan for next steps:

- a. **What?** What (if anything) from today’s conversation did you find interesting?
- b. **So What?** In what ways has this session challenged your thinking about approaches to teaching the Bible? Your understanding of service?
- c. **Now What?** How do you intend to use what you’ve learned in this session in your day-to-day life or within your congregation? (For example: how you read the Bible, interact with others, or lead service projects at your church.)

**7. Closing**

**Extend the Conversation**

- Read Exodus 7:14-18 and Luke 4:16-19. Using the template above, create a service experience that gives meaning to these passages. (Hint: Think about possibilities related to prison ministry, human rights advocacy, or human trafficking.)
- Discuss specific ways in which an existing service project at your church (e.g., church cleanup day, quilt making, or a canned food drive) can be deepened by using the four-step service learning process.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

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- ELCA World Hunger Program. [www.elca.org/hunger](http://www.elca.org/hunger)
- ELCA Journeys for Youth and Young Adults (Servant Learning, High Adventure, and Alternative Spring Break Programs). [www.elca.org/camps/journeys.html](http://www.elca.org/camps/journeys.html)
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)
- National Youth Leadership Council. [www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)
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- When God's People Travel Together*. Vol. 1: A Trip Leader's Planning Manual; Vol. 2: Reflecting and Acting on Mission Trip Experiences; Vol. 3: Bible Studies for Mission. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church USA. [www.pcusa.org/marketplace](http://www.pcusa.org/marketplace)

## PRESENTERS' PROFILES

**David Ellingson** is Professor of Children, Youth & Family Studies at Trinity Lutheran College in Everett, WA. He also directs the Service And Learning Leadership Team (SALLT) Project, an initiative to equip youth ministry leaders with training and resources to lead meaningful service and mission experiences. An ordained pastor for 40 years, Dave's ministry has always involved youth and young adults, as a campus pastor, parish pastor, college and seminary professor, and youth ministry coordinator for ELCA Region 1. He holds a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School and a Doctor of Ministry from Claremont School of Theology. [david.ellingson@tlc.edu](mailto:david.ellingson@tlc.edu)

**Mark Jackson** serves as Professor of Children, Youth & Family Studies and Director of the Center for Community Engagement at Trinity Lutheran College in Everett, WA. In addition to teaching courses in program planning and administration, he has a growing interest in how service experiences shape the adolescent faith journey. He is a trainer and writer with the Service And Learning Leadership Team (SALLT) Project, which promotes effective practices in leading youth service experiences through training, resources, and research. Mark has completed graduate studies in lay pastoral ministry at Gonzaga University and nonprofit management at Regis University. [mark.jackson@tlc.edu](mailto:mark.jackson@tlc.edu)