



Session 3

Getting Ready to Serve: Spiritual Preparation for the Individual

Purpose: To better prepare students for the spiritual task that is ahead of them as they meet those who need Christ.

Passage: John 12:25-26; Proverbs 4:23; Psalm 139:23-24

Preparation:

- Prepare for this session by taking time to pray through the related Scripture passages. Read through John 12 to understand the context of what you are teaching, as well as Proverbs 4:23 and Psalm 139.
- Read through the lesson to prepare spiritually and mentally to teach it. Avoid just reading the lesson to your students. Take the time needed to read and study it thoroughly, and be prepared to make this lesson your own.
- Choose the options that you plan to use with your group. Please note what is offered are options, feel free to make the lesson yours and use your own options as well. Prior to teaching, gather together items needed for the options you choose.
- This lesson is a very important. It should help you understand who is ready to serve and who needs to understand a little more about selfishness and their relationship with God. Take time and pray for the individuals that will be in attendance for this lesson. Pray for their heart, their mind and their actions.

Plan Options:

Choose from the following learning activities based on available teaching time:

- Preparing Your Heart (**ice breaker**) – **5 minutes**
- Read the Word! (**Scripture focus**) – **15 minutes**
- Read the Word (Part 2)! (**Scripture focus**) – **10 minutes**
- The Gospel (**heart inspection**) – **10-15 minutes**
- Read the Word (Part 3)! (**Scripture focus**) – **15 minutes**
- Group Option (**large and small group activity**) – **15 minutes**
- Closing (wrap-up) – **5 minutes**

Prepare Your Heart (ice breaker) – 5 minutes

1. Ask students to pick partners or plan to choose partners for them. They need to be paired in groups of two. Ask each student take turns for 30 seconds writing down all of the things that they know about their partner. Give a chance for both students to write their responses. After finishing, ask students share their responses with the group to see how true the responses are.

2. The Point. Say, “The point for all to learn is that no matter how well you think you know a person or how well you can guess what a person likes or does not like, you do not know what’s in the heart.”

3. Say or paraphrase: “You may know a lot of externals about your friends. You may even know some personal things if you are close enough friends, but you cannot know the heart. Only God can see through all of the masks that we wear everyday. Only God can see our true motives for dressing the way we do, saying the things we do, and doing the things we do.”

4. Ask, “How is your heart?”

Read the Word! (Scripture focus) – 15 minutes

1. Ask a student to read Psalm 139:23-24.

2. Say or paraphrase: “Studying the Psalms is always a very interesting task. There are Psalms on Israel coming out of Egypt. There are Psalms on sin and repentance. There are Psalms of joy and Psalms of sorrow. Throughout the book of Psalms there are many pages written about the sovereignty of God and how God knows all. Psalm 139 is one of the Psalms that portrays God at His truest character: all-knowing.

Although your students have read only the last two verses of Psalm 139, you may want to go over some of the important things within the whole Psalm as well. For example:

- The Lord has already searched everyone and knows everyone (v. 1)
- God’s knowledge is too much for us to comprehend. (vs. 5-6)
- We cannot hide from God. (vs. 7-9)
- The night is as day for God. (vs. 12)
- God formed each one of us in the womb. (v. 13)
- We should praise God for making us, He knows our beginning and end. (vs. 14-16)
- We cannot count the thoughts God has toward us. (vs.17-18)
- God even knows who does not believe Him, hate Him or plays Him like a game. (vs.19-22)

3. Say or paraphrase, “This should paint the picture that God knows all, loves all, cares for all, and desires for all to know Him.” Now take this time and get very pointed with your students and adults that are going on this mission experience. Help them to understand their upcoming mission by explaining that going on mission for God can be performed by anyone and make it look real, but we do not want this to be a performance

for your students and adults. We want them to be right with God and focused on the task ahead.

4. Use the questions below to get the ball rolling in their minds about sin, salvation and serving. Make sure you allow time in between each question for thought “rhetorical” until the last question, then have your group answer out loud. Ask:

- When was the last time you said to God, “Search me?” (v. 23)
- When you say, “Search me,” what are you hiding that you think God is not seeing?
- What “wicked ways” might be lingering in your heart? (v. 24)
- Based on the rest of the Psalm, is there anything that can be hidden from God, wicked or not?

5. Say or paraphrase, “We may think that we are getting away with a lot of things until we read Psalm 139. We also may think we are getting away with a lot of things when it comes to friends, parents, co-workers, church friends, etc... as well. The problem is, however, Proverbs 4:23 says something different.

Read the Word (Part 2)! (Scripture focus) – 10 minutes

1. Ask another student to read Proverbs 4:23.

2. Say or paraphrase, “Proverbs is a book of wise sayings, most of which, can be attributed to Solomon, King David’s son. Most of the Proverbs themselves are read in just short sentences which makes them very easy to memorize and very easy to apply. In this case Proverbs 4:23 says, ‘Keep your heart... for out of it springs the issues of life.’ These issues are what gives away how much you love Christ or if you even care about God at all.”

3. Once again, encourage the group think about the issues in which they may be trying to hide, but this time ask them the questions below. The heart is often spoken of in God’s Word as our inerrant being. A noted theologian, Warren Wiersbe, says that the heart is the “master-control” or the life – a wrong heart always produces a wrong life. To allow sin into the heart is to pollute the entire life.” (*The Bible Exposition Commentary, Warren Wiersbe, Old Testament Wisdom and Poetry, Cook Communications Ministries, Colorado Springs, Co. 366-69, 2004*). Ask,

- How do you act when you are with your friends?
- How different do you act when you are at church?
- What kind of language do you use?
- How do you handle people that are not just like you?
- Have you found any issues that can help you understand how well or how poor you are loving Christ?

4. Say or paraphrase, “It is very important that each one of you understand what we are about tackle during the summer. We are not going to a camp. We are not going to a resort. We are not going to just have fun, but we will. We are not going to a five-star restaurant. We are going to minister to people who need to hear the name of Jesus. In

order for all of us to do this we are going to have to be spiritually prepared. The question I am about to ask is very personal. I make no apologies. If we are going to minister to those that need Christ, we need to be walking with Christ. Are you?”

The Gospel (heart inspection) – 10-15 minutes

1. Ask, “Do you have a personal relationship with Christ? Note: This is where, as a teacher, you need to share the gospel. Share it plainly and simply. Offer an opportunity for those that do not know Christ to start a new relationship with Him. One of my favorite ways to do this is the Roman Road. It’s simple: Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10. Do not forget to let them know that this accepting Christ thing is not a one-time deal. Walking with Christ is a daily walk that builds a relationship. You are saved when you believe, but your walk just begins. You have to remember that some may be crawling and some may be running. Everyone’s relationship moves at a different pace.

2. Say or paraphrase the following,

- “If you do, are you walking with Christ day in and day out?”
- “Are you allowing God to speak His truths of His word in your life?”
- “Are you praying to God on a regular basis?”

3. Prepare the individual for service. After the previous exercise everyone should have a good understanding of what their heart looks like. They should know whether or not they are free and clean before the Lord or if they need to do some repenting before they move on. Make sure that as you move through this part of the lesson that you help each student and adult understand how important it is to put his or her faith to action.

Read the Word (Part 3) – 15 minutes

1. Ask a student to read John 12:20-26.

2. Note for your understanding or to paraphrase: “In this passage, Jesus is the subject and the walk and service to Christ is what he is teaching about. Jesus refers to this grain of wheat falling to the ground and dying in John 12:24 to show that death must occur in the individuals life before he or she can live and truly walk with Him. He then makes the claim that the one who loves his own life will lose it and the one who hates his life will gain eternal life through Christ. Loving your life and hating your life are tied very closely, so close they cannot be separated, to the world. The world is such a dictator over everyone. We all desire more things. We all desire the best cars. We all desire to have more money. We all desire to have a high social status. We all desire for others to see us as special. John 12:25 explains that we must hate our lives in this world in order to have eternal life. Then Jesus changes His idea from hating life in the world to serving and following Him in John 12:26. Jesus’ premise is that when we as individuals, as Christians, hate our lives in this world we will serve and follow Jesus in this world. Jesus places a high honor on serving and following Him in this world. John 12:26 proclaims that if anyone serves Jesus, God will honor them.

3. Say or paraphrase, “Christianity is the only religion that says we must die before we can live. This may sound strange, but Scripture proclaims that we are to die to

ourselves. Scripture says things like: “Pick up your cross and follow me,” “The first shall be last and the last shall be first,” or “He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in the world will keep it for eternal life.” Each one of these statements refer to us as individual getting out of the way and allowing God to work through us. When we allow ourselves to hate our lives in this world we become better followers of Christ. It is then that we are able to serve.

4. Ask these questions or come up with some of your own:

- Do you hate your life in this world?
- Are there things in this world you need to let go of that are taking your time away from Christ?
- What is service?
- What does it take to be a good follower/servant?
- What has to happen in order for you to serve someone else?

After helping your students understand more about service and following Christ, you may want to use the option below to help them find ways to serve on the Mission Serve project they will be on during the summer.

Group Option (large and small group activity) – 15 minutes

Paraphrase: It is amazing how God allows us to be part of His plan. Serving is one the ways that God extends His hand to earth through us. Ask students to use their smartphones to look up the city that they will be going for their Mission Serve experience in the summer. Ask them to find out one or two things about the city and the people that live there. Ask them to look for the kind of jobs most of the people have. Have them look to see if there are big industries or small businesses. Ask them to search the unemployment rate and annual income. You may even want them to look up the different religions within the city.

For Your Understanding: After giving them time to find a few things, help them draw some conclusions on how to serve the people of the city better. For instance, if you are planning on going to Cherokee, North Carolina; the people are very different. All of the people in Cherokee that you will meet on site will be Native Indians. They live on the reservation and unemployment is very high. Diabetes is at the rate of 90 percent with in native Cherokee Indians. Also, Cherokee Indians are very proud of their heritage. So, the question is, “How do you serve the Cherokee Indians?” You serve by praying for them spiritually as well as meeting their needs. You need to learn about their culture so that you may have a good conversation with them. They love talking about their culture. These things are good to know about Cherokee. Now have them share a few things that they have learned.

Closing (wrap-up) – 5 minutes

In closing, make it clear to your students and adults that this mission experience is not about them in any way. In your own words, help students to understand:

- The purpose of this mission experience is for them to be last and for everyone else to be first.
- That everything will not go their way.
- There is a possibility that the school or church they will stay in will have problems.
- There is a possibility that things with the homeowner they will be working with may not be home all week.
- That they may even have to take a cold shower or work in extreme heat to do what God has called them to do.
- That none of their efforts are being done for something in return.

Say, “Because of these things, our heart must be focused on Jesus and living out the Jesus lifestyle.” Encourage students to continue to research the place they will be going this summer to help them understand more about the people they will be ministering to.