
Life Group Leaders' Guide: The Great Invitation: Serving Others

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin your time together with prayer, asking God to open your eyes to the people and places He is calling you to serve. Ask Him to reveal where you may be holding back, relying on your own strength, or seeking recognition rather than serving from His love. Pray that He would form you more into the image of Christ as you practice humility, generosity, and self-sacrificial love.

Worship Song Suggestions (10 minutes)

"Make Me a Servant" – Kelly Willard

"Build My Life" – Housefires / Pat Barrett

"The Servant King" – Graham Kendrick

"I Surrender All" – Traditional / modern versions

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Question: Growing up, what was one message you were taught, either directly or indirectly, about what "strong" people do or do not do? For example: strong people don't ask for help, don't show weakness, don't serve others, don't cry, don't apologize, or don't let people see them struggle. Where do you think that message came from?

Key Scripture Passages

This week's message from Matthew 20:25–28:

Jesus called them together and said,

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Key Takeaways (5 minutes)

- Serving is not just a task to complete; it is a posture of the heart that forms us into the image of Christ.
- Jesus modeled servant leadership by choosing the lowest place first, and He calls His followers to do the same.
- Science and Scripture agree: giving your life away in service to others leads to a fuller, more joyful life.

- Serving changes the culture of every environment you are placed in: your home, workplace, school, and church.
 - Your "place of impact" (POI) is wherever God has uniquely positioned you, and no one else has the same access you do.
 - The greatest act of service in history was the cross, and it is from that finished work that all our serving flows.
-

Discussion Questions

Open up the Conversation (10–15 Minutes)

Take a few minutes to get everyone talking before diving into the deeper content.

1. Think of a time when someone served you in an unexpected or meaningful way. What did that experience feel like, and what did it reveal to you about that person or about God?
-

Going Deeper (15–20 Minutes)

2. Pastor Mark described two types of spiritual blockages: people who receive God's love but never let it flow outward, and people who pour themselves out for others until they burn out. Which of these tendencies do you relate to more, and why?
3. In Matthew 20, Jesus tells His disciples that whoever wants to be great must become a servant. How does that challenge or contradict the way our culture typically defines greatness or success?
4. In the sermon, Pastor Mark described Jesus choosing the servant's table first and trusting the master to elevate him at the right time. What does it look like practically to "start in the mud" in your own life: at work, at home, or in your relationships?
5. Pastor Mark shared research showing that serving others is linked to longer life, greater happiness, and reduced loneliness and depression. Does that surprise you? How does it change the way you think about serving, from something you "should" do to something that actually benefits you?
6. In John 13, Jesus washes His disciples' feet and then asks them, "Do you understand what I have done for you?" What do you think He meant by that question? What was He trying to communicate beyond the physical act?
7. In the sermon, Pastor Mark said that serving is not just doing a task for someone; it is giving the fullness of your person. What is the difference between those two things? Can you think of an example from your own life where you did one but not the other?

8. Philippians 2 describes Jesus not using his equality with God to his own advantage, but instead making himself nothing and taking the form of a servant. How does meditating on what Jesus gave up shape the way you think about what you are being asked to give?
-

Personal Reflection (10–15 Minutes)

9. Pastor Mark introduced the idea of your "place of impact" (POI); the specific people and environments where God has uniquely positioned you. Where is your place of impact right now? Who has access to you that no one else does?
10. What is one thing that has been holding you back from serving more freely or more consistently? Is it fear, busyness, a sense that you have nothing to offer, or something else?
-

Practical Applications (10 minutes)

This Week, Choose One or More of the Following:

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice this week before your group meets again.

- **Serve someone today.** Pastor Mark made this the homework for the week, not next week, today. Identify one person in your life right now who has a need, and do something specific to meet it. Come back to group ready to share what happened.
 - **Identify your POI.** Spend some time this week writing down your specific place of impact. Who are the people in your life: at work, at school, in your neighborhood, in your family, whom only you have access to? Ask God how he wants you to serve them.
 - **Flip the script in one relationship.** Pick one relationship where you tend to ask "what am I getting out of this?" and intentionally shift your posture to "how can I serve this person this week?" It could be a spouse, coworker, parent, or friend.
 - **Try something new at church.** If you have never served in a ministry role at your church, take a step toward finding one this week. Talk to someone at the connect table or reach out to a ministry leader. Remember the pastor's point—many people who said, "I could never do that," discovered they could once they tried.
 - **Pray for your place of impact.** Each morning this week, before you go into your workplace, school, or home, pause and pray: "God, show me who needs to be served today and give me the courage and love to do it."
-

Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

Close your group time by praying together over your places of impact. You may want to invite each person to name one specific person or environment they are committing to serve this week, and then pray over each of those together as a group. Ask God to replace selfish motives with genuine love, and to use your service to point people back to him.

Leader Notes

- This message touches themes that can feel personal or exposing: serving, selfish motives, humility, pride, burnout, feeling unseen, church hurt, toxic work environments, loneliness, depression, anxiety, family roles, marriage tension, finances, generosity, spiritual gifts, and feeling like you do not have much to offer. Create a safe space where people can talk honestly without being shamed, corrected too quickly, or pressured to volunteer before they are ready.
- A helpful direction for the discussion: move from “What do I get?” to “How can I love?”; from spiritual muscle-flexing to faithful action; from ambition and self-protection to humble service; and from serving out of guilt to serving from the love of Christ. The goal is not to make people feel used, obligated, or manipulated into church labor. The goal is to help people see that serving is an invitation from Jesus into deeper life, formation, joy, and kingdom impact.
- Keep bringing the conversation back to the message’s central truth: Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve, and He calls His people to follow Him in that same way. Serving is not just completing a task; it is offering our lives in love because Christ has first served us. The bowl and towel are not symbols of weakness or insignificance; they symbolize the way of Jesus.
- Be careful not to let the discussion become a guilt-driven conversation about “doing more.” Some people may already feel exhausted, overlooked, or burned by past serving experiences. Others may have served from insecurity, people-pleasing, or trying to earn approval. Let people name those experiences without minimizing them. Encourage the group to consider not only whether they serve, but why and how.
- Also be mindful that conversations about humility can land differently for different people. Some may need to be challenged to lay down pride or ambition. Others may already struggle with low self-worth and may hear “go low” as “you do not matter.” Clarify that biblical humility is not self-hatred or erasing your value. It is trusting God with your place, your gifts, your timing, and your recognition.
- A helpful emphasis: serving flows from being loved by Jesus, not from trying to earn His love. We serve because Christ has washed our feet, forgiven our sins, and given us His Spirit. When we serve from that place, God forms us, blesses others, and changes the culture around us.

-
- Encourage people to identify their “POI,” their place of impact. That may be their home, marriage, workplace, school, church, neighborhood, team, or city. Help them think practically and prayerfully: Who has God placed near me? What needs can I see? What do I have to offer? What is one simple act of service I can take this week?
 - End with grace and invitation. The next step does not need to be dramatic. It may be apologizing to a spouse, helping at home, encouraging a coworker, signing up to serve, bringing someone a meal, praying for someone, giving generously, or simply noticing a need. The invitation is to follow Jesus with open hands, open eyes, and a willing heart.
-

Additional Discussion Questions to Choose From

The sermon describes two types of people -- those who receive God's love but never pour it out, and those who pour out so much they burn out -- which tendency do you most identify with, and what do you think is at the root of it?

Jesus tells his disciples in Matthew 20 that greatness in his kingdom is defined by servanthood rather than rank or authority -- how does this challenge or reshape the way you define success in your own life?

The pastor describes 'spiritual formation' as a process where serving others gradually shapes you into the image of Christ -- can you think of a time when an act of service changed something in you rather than just in the person you were serving?

The sermon warns that it is possible to do great things for people with entirely selfish motives -- how do you personally examine your own heart to discern whether your service flows from genuine love or from a desire for recognition?

Jesus chose a bowl and a towel as his instruments of influence rather than power or position -- what are the 'bowls and towels' available to you in your current season of life, and are you using them?

The pastor introduces the concept of a 'place of impact' -- the unique space where only you have access to certain people -- how intentionally are you thinking about your workplace, family, or neighborhood as a mission field for service?

Research cited in the sermon suggests that serving others is linked to longer life, greater happiness, and reduced loneliness -- does knowing that serving is both spiritually commanded and scientifically beneficial change your motivation to serve, or does it complicate it?

In John 13, Jesus says that the way his disciples love and serve one another is how the world will recognize them as his followers -- what does the quality of love and service within your community say about the God you claim to follow?

The sermon draws on Philippians 2 to describe how Jesus, though equal with God, took on the nature of a servant -- what would it look like practically for you to 'make yourself nothing' in one of your key relationships this week?

The pastor argues that serving others is not merely completing a task but offering the fullness of your redeemed person -- how does this broader definition of service expand or challenge the ways you have previously thought about volunteering or helping others?

5-Day Devotional: A Life of Servant-Hearted Faith

Day 1: The Upside-Down Kingdom

Reading: Matthew 20:25-28 — Jesus contrasts worldly power with kingdom greatness, declaring that true leadership is found in servanthood, not dominance.

Devotional:

The world tells you to climb. Jesus tells you to kneel. In a culture obsessed with titles, rank, and recognition, Christ redefines greatness entirely. He does not ask you to abandon ambition; He redirects it.

The question is not how high you can rise, but how low you are willing to go first. Starting at the servant's table is not a punishment. It is a position of trust. When you go low, you place yourself in the hands of the Master, who alone decides when and how to lift you. Today, resist the urge to promote yourself. Choose the lower seat and trust the One who raises the humble.

Reflection:

Where in your life are you striving for the top rather than trusting God to lift you in His timing?

Application:

Identify one situation today where you can deliberately choose to serve rather than to lead, and do it without announcing it to anyone.

Day 2: Formed by Faithfulness

Reading: John 13:12-17 — After washing His disciples' feet, Jesus explains that He has set an example, calling His followers to serve one another just as He has served them.

Devotional:

Jesus did not wash His disciples' feet simply to check a box of humility. He was showing them the shape of a transformed life. Every act of genuine service is a chisel in the hands of God, carving you more closely into the image of Christ.

Spiritual formation is not only what happens in quiet moments of prayer; it happens in the mud, in the inconvenience, in the moment you choose someone else's need over your own comfort. When you serve out of love that flows from God rather than a desire for recognition, you are not just helping someone else. You are becoming someone new.

Reflection: Are you serving out of genuine love, or are you quietly hoping someone will notice and reward you?

Application: Serve someone today in a way that no one else will see or know about. Notice how it feels, and bring that feeling before God in prayer.

Day 3: The Gift You Were Made to Give

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 — Paul describes how the Spirit distributes different gifts to different people, but all gifts are given for the common good of the whole body.

Devotional:

You were not saved to sit still. God deposited something specific inside you: a gift, a capacity, a calling, not so you could admire it privately, but so the people around you could experience God through it. When you withhold your gift, the body of Christ is incomplete.

When you use it, people don't just receive your help; they encounter God's grace. Many believers spend years feeling unqualified, unseen, or unsure of what they have to offer. But the Spirit does not give gifts to people who have it all together. He gives gifts to people who are willing. Willingness is your only qualification.

Reflection:

What gift or capacity has God placed in you that you have been hesitant to offer to others?

Application:

Take one small step this week to use your gift in service of your church, your family, or your community. Start small. Start today.

Day 4: Serving Changes Everything Around You

Reading: 2 Corinthians 9:12-15 — Paul explains that generous service not only meets practical needs but overflows into thanksgiving and praise to God from those who receive it.

Devotional: Your act of service is never just a transaction. When you give generously and love sacrificially, something happens in the heart of the person receiving it: they look past you and see God. Your faithfulness becomes a testimony. Your consistency becomes a sermon.

That is why toxic environments, broken relationships, and discouraged communities aren't primarily fixed by arguments or complaints. People who choose to serve anyway transform them. When you wash someone's feet in a place that has never seen that kind of love, you do not just change the atmosphere. You bring the kingdom of God into a room that didn't know it was missing.

Reflection:

Is there a difficult relationship or environment in your life where God may be calling you to serve your way to transformation rather than argue your way to resolution?

Application :

Choose one person in a difficult relationship or environment and do something unexpectedly kind for them this week. Pray for them before and after.

Day 5: The Cross Is the Ultimate Invitation

Reading: Philippians 2:5-11 — Paul describes how Jesus, though equal with God, humbled Himself completely, taking on human form and dying on the cross, and was therefore exalted by the Father above all things.

Devotional:

The entire logic of the kingdom of God is written in the cross. Jesus did not have to leave heaven. He did not have to take on flesh, endure suffering, or submit to death. But He did; not out of obligation, but out of love. This is the foundation of every act of service you will ever offer. You are not serving to earn anything. You are serving because it has already been done for you.

The cross is not just your salvation: it is your model. It shows you that the path to resurrection always runs through surrender. Every time you lay down your comfort, your agenda, or your pride to serve another person, you are walking in the footsteps of the One who laid down everything for you.

Reflection:

How does the reality of what Christ has already done for you change the way you approach serving others — not as a burden, but as a response to grace?

Application:

Spend time this week meditating on Philippians 2:5-11. Write down one specific way you will carry the mindset of Christ into your home, workplace, or community in the coming days, and commit it to God in prayer.