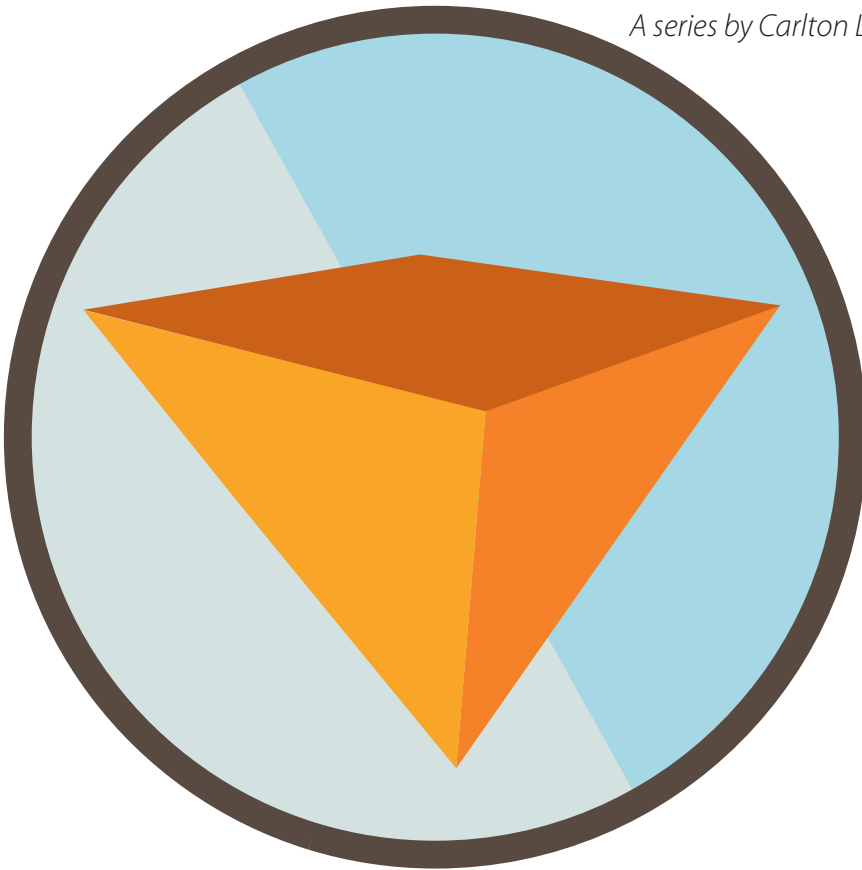


ADULT

The Upside-Down Pyramid

A series by Carlton L. Coon, Sr.



SERIES BIG IDEA

Because Jesus lived His life as a servant, as His followers, we are called to do the same.

Lesson 3.1

The Identity of a Servant

Lesson 3.2

Looking Out for Number One

Lesson 3.3

The Perils of Servanthood

Lesson 3.4

The Rewards of Servanthood



The Upside-Down Pyramid: The Identity of a Servant

A series by Carlton L. Coon, Sr.

Lesson Big Idea: Because we have been called to serve, we should take on the identity of a servant.

Foundation

Scripture Focus: Romans 1:1

Tell the story of the rich woman and the flight attendant on page 78.

Frame

- A. The Philistines went on the attack to discourage Saul and Israel's rebellion.
 1. Israel's success and that of Jonathan came with the vital participation of a **servant**.
 - » *What traits or behaviors do you imagine when you think of a servant?* ⚙️
 - » *Who comes to your mind when you think of someone who demonstrates servanthood? Why?* ⚙️
 - » I Samuel 14:6
 - » I Samuel 14:7
 2. Not only was Jonathan committed to action, so also was his armorbearer.
 - » *Why do you think the servant chose not to talk negatively about Jonathan's decision?* ⚙️
 - » *Was it the right thing to do? Why or why not?* ⚙️
- B. A servant of Jesus turns the pyramid of **selfishness** and self-interest upside down.
 - » *Why do some people talk about service yet do not regularly serve?* ⚙️
 - 1. Service can be given, not only in action, but in the manner of one's conversation.
 - » Proverbs 25:11
 - » *How have words spoken by others positively impacted your life?* ⚙️
 - 2. A person's self-declaration is important because it usually defines what one feels to be important about oneself.
 - » Romans 1:1
 - » *Do you normally view yourself as a "servant of Jesus Christ"? Why or why not?* ⚙️

C. In Christianity, **servanthood** is non-negotiable.

1. Servanthood is seldom easy and generally countercultural.

» *Why is an attitude of serving countercultural?* ⚙️

2. Servanthood is a **priority**.

3. Servanthood is followership.

» *What does it mean to be a good follower?* ⚙️

D. **Servants** take action!

1. Servants can encourage.


» *Are you someone who uses affirmation and encouraging words to help others? Why or why not?* ⚙️

2. Serving generally follows the form of one's gifts and talents.

Finish

Tell the story of Albert Schweitzer on page 82.

Foundation

Scripture Focus: Romans 1:1 

In *Perilous Pursuits*, Joseph Stowell shared the story of a friend who was flying coast to coast. Circumstances had allowed the friend to be upgraded to a first-class ticket. As the traveler reclined in the comfort of his leather seat, he noticed that across the aisle from him was an older couple who were obviously very wealthy—“old money,” as they say.

As the flight began, a flight attendant made her way down the aisle and said to this older woman, “Ma’am, would you like a pillow?” The older lady looked straight ahead without answering. Thinking that perhaps the plane’s engines were a little too loud, the flight attendant raised her voice and repeated her question. Still no response.

So assuming the woman was hearing-impaired, the attendant said in a voice that could be heard throughout the first-class cabin, “Ma’am, would you like a pillow?”

At this point the husband turned to the flight attendant and said, “You’ll have to excuse my wife. She doesn’t speak to servants.”

(Story comes from Joseph Stowell, Perilous Pursuits—Overcoming Our Obsession with Significance.)

How that remark must have hurt the flight attendant! I doubt she smilingly went to tell her colleagues, “Someone has finally recognized my true identity!” I expect the flight attendant was deeply offended.

By contrast, in Scripture one can often see the value and significance of those who simply serve. Such an instance is recorded in I Samuel 14.

Frame

The setting is around 1050 BC. At that time, the Philistines were the dominant nation in Palestine. Saul was the new king leading the Israelites—a nation of relative newcomers to the area. Saul raised the ire of the Philistines by attacking a garrison of Philistine soldiers who were stationed in Geba. The next events were predictable. **The Philistines went on the attack to discourage Saul and Israel’s rebellion.** There was great peril to the young nation of Israel. Every advantage lay with the Philistines. Three specific things give context to the situation.

The Israelites had few weapons to use in conflict. From their position of regional dominance, the Philistines had established laws prohibiting the Israelites from having any blacksmiths living among them. (See I Samuel 13:19–22.) When the Philistines threatened attack, the Israelites had no option except to sharpen farm implements to use as weapons. King Saul and his son Jonathan were the only warriors to have either a sword or spear. As the battle-lines were drawn, the Israelites were overwhelmingly out-armed.

Second, the Philistines had a much larger army. The Philistines staged thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen. When Saul finally counted his soldiers, there were only six hundred; six hundred Israelite soldiers armed with shovels, mattocks, and pitchforks against a well-armed and overwhelmingly larger force of Philistines. Not only were the Israelites lacking decent weapons, they were out-manned.

Finally, there seems to have been no plan of action. It takes reading between the lines a bit— noticing what is not being said, as well as the eventual desperate action of Saul’s son Jonathan—to realize that Saul had no strategy in mind. His people were frightened, cowering like animals, and hiding in caves among the rocks. There was a void of direction. Saul’s only instructions were to restrain action.

As one looks at these three facts, it would seem that defeat was certain, but the Israelites won this particular conflict in spite of the weaknesses of their weapons, their limits in numbers, and lack of strategy. **Israel's success and that of Jonathan came with the vital participation of a servant.** ✎ P

⚙️ **What traits or behaviors do you imagine when you think of a servant?**

⚙️ **Who comes to your mind when you think of someone who demonstrates servanthood? Why?**

As noted earlier, Saul's son Jonathan had one of only two real weapons. It seems Jonathan became a bit frustrated with his father's mandate to sit and wait. Finally, Jonathan said to his military servant, "Let's go over to the garrison of the Philistines." In this instance the servant actually had the role of being Jonathan's armorbearer.

The armorbearer is not named in Scripture, nor would this servant have expected to be known or named. He was only a servant! A servant knows his place and recognizes that no credit is to be attributed to him. An armorbearer's role was important, if not essential. An armorbearer served a notable warrior like Jonathan by carrying that warrior's weapons. Regardless of how important that role was, the person who carried it out was still only a servant.

Jonathan did not tell Saul of his plan to go up against the Philistines. Jonathan's only conversation about what he was planning was with this unnamed servant. On arriving at the Philistine's stronghold, Jonathan spoke confidently of Jehovah's ability "to save by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6, KJV). P Jonathan's armorbearer's response was, "Do all that is in thine heart . . . I am with thee according to thy heart" (1 Samuel 14:7, KJV). P Interestingly, the servant did not cite the difficult realities of the situation—he also did not try to talk Jonathan out of this radical action—but expressed his absolute support of Jonathan's faith in God and of Jonathan's desire to take action. The servant became committed to the action of his master.

Not only was Jonathan committed to action, so also was his armorbearer. The servant went so far as to indicate a knowledge of Jonathan's heart and a willingness to serve on the basis of what he envisioned as being in Jonathan's heart.



The armorbearer could have argued against Jonathan's risky plan, or perhaps the armorbearer could have communicated with Saul and told the king of Jonathan's risky plan.

⚙️ **Why do you think the servant chose not to talk negatively about Jonathan's decision?**


⚙️ **Was it the right thing to do? Why or why not?**

Instead of doing anything to protect himself or to dissuade Jonathan from a seemingly foolish course, the servant responded, "Do what is in your heart." With that statement the servant was committing himself to serve regardless of the outcome. The Hebrew word for *heart* covers three facets of human life: the mental process, emotions, and will. (Brent Bolin, "The Heart and the Mind—What the Biblical Word 'Heart' Means") Jonathan's servant was expressing his absolute commitment to Jonathan and to the course of action he had laid out.


LESSON BIG IDEA: Because we have been called to serve, we should take on the identity of a servant.

Such a high level of commitment is a great description of what a servant of Jesus Christ is to be. **A servant of Jesus turns the pyramid of selfishness and self-interest upside down**   to commit his or her mental process, emotions, and will to Jesus Christ. Such commitment is not relegated to a few hours on Sunday. It is a dedication to follow Jesus wherever He leads. It is important to realize that serving is not a matter of convenience. One cannot say, "I have a servant's heart and soul" and then not take action in his or her master's cause. Jonathan's servant not only made a verbal commitment, he followed through. His behavior identified his commitment. One's behavior in service is always more important than what one says about service.

Why do some people talk about service yet do not regularly serve?



Not only did this servant engage in necessary action, Jonathan's armorbearer became an encourager. **Service can be given, not only in action, but in the manner of one's conversation.** The armorbearer may be unknown to us, but to Jonathan, his service in commitment to Jonathan's cause and the spoken words of encouragement would have had great meaning. A supportive word is one of those words fitly spoken, that its value is like apples of gold. (See Proverbs 25:11.) 

How have words spoken by others positively impacted your life?

A person's self-declaration is important because it usually defines what one feels to be important about oneself. Paul's self-declaration to the Romans adhered to the teaching of Jesus regarding that matter. Paul introduced himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ." In writing to the church at Rome, Paul was addressing people he did not know well. Many of the saints in Rome would have been total strangers to Paul. In the first words of his letter to the Romans, Paul did not tell of demons being cast out, of miracles of healing, of his education, or of his significant accomplishments in life. Paul began simply, in a non-threatening manner, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:1, KJV).  Paul saw himself first as a servant! Whether or not Paul was called to any further role, he was "a servant of Jesus Christ."

Do you normally view yourself as a "servant of Jesus Christ"? Why or why not?

I do not know that Jesus' teaching or Paul's application of it will ever be particularly popular. It is not that the term "servant" is difficult to grasp, but the challenge is that we actually grasp the concept of "servant" all too well and do not want our lives to be defined by that word. The word has humble implications, more akin to slave than we typically think. Across history, servanthood was marked by loss of freedom, limited income, and lack of social status. No one wants to be a servant. No one in modern North America raises their children with the hopes that their children would become servants.

Interestingly, **in Christianity, servanthood is non-negotiable.**   Any who follow Christ should not wait for a call to be a servant. Each disciple of Jesus Christ is simply to be a servant of Jesus!



Paul so quickly declaring his servanthood to the Romans poses the question: If I were writing a letter to some largely unknown people a thousand miles away, would I introduce myself as a "servant of Jesus Christ"? In this upside-down world of Christianity, believers could and should think of themselves in this way: as servants of Jesus Christ!

Those who would follow Jonathan's servant or the apostle Paul in serving should understand several things.

Servanthood is seldom easy and generally countercultural. Paul, an apostle, defined himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. Jonathan's armorbearer went past what might have been rationally expected to support Jonathan in attacking the Philistines. Paul could have first presented himself as an apostle, but he chose not to. Jonathan's servant could have looked for some other option, but he chose not to.



Neither took other routes lying before them. The concept of servanthood is an over-arching premise of godly living. Servanthood seems contrary to any idea of success, of gaining influence, or making an impact in the world. Yet in biblical experience, servanthood is the common approach to all things meaningful. As far as God is concerned, greatness is measured with the yardstick of service. Those who serve others become the impact makers of their time.

Why is an attitude of serving countercultural?

Servanthood is a priority.   Several writers report that the nineteenth century revivalist Charles Finney taught, "No man is truly converted who does not live to serve others." Based on that observation, are you converted? What would your neighbor or a fellow worshiper say? Do those people see you as a servant? For Paul, seeing himself in this way and being known by others as a servant was a priority. It must also take precedence for each Christian.

Servanthood is followership. Much is written about leadership, but all who lead must also follow. Paul was known as a leader of the church, but he wanted all to know that he was first a servant of Jesus Christ. Paul saw himself as a follower, a servant. Serving Jesus always involves being a good follower.

What does it mean to be a good follower?

Servants take action!   As wonderful as the verbal and emotional encouragement may have been, Jonathan needed the servant's hands. Jonathan needed the armorbearer to carry his weapons and be available in the skirmish with the Philistines. Serving Jesus is not giving lip service or mental assent. Servers take action. A person who says he is committed to Christ but does nothing to advance His cause either does not understand what it really means to be a servant or is not being totally honest. One's actions follow one's heart. If a person has a servant's heart, he will act as a servant. One cannot say, "I have a servant's heart," and then not serve in some way. Behavior will always identify what is in one's heart.

Servants can encourage. Jonathan's armorbearer became Jonathan's encourager. "I'm with you" is a powerful phrase. The armorbearer's service was not only in his actions—though as already noted the servant's action is essential—it was also in his conversation. Verbally, the armorbearer was affirming Jonathan's decision and his plan of action.

The supportive words of Jonathan's armorbearer had value for Jonathan as the two of them faced a difficult challenge. Our words can make such a difference to others, including those who lead us or whom we serve alongside. Job's friend Eliphaz said of Job, "Your words have supported those who were falling; you encouraged those with shaky knees" (Job 4:4, NLT). Jonathan's armorbearer's words would have supported Jonathan and helped keep Jonathan on his feet. Can the same be said of your words? Servants can also affirm. "Affirmation is a way of saying to others how important their ministries are . . . providing support, and entering their celebration." (Kenneth Gangel, *Coaching Ministry Teams*)

LESSON BIG IDEA: Because we have been called to serve, we should take on the identity of a servant.

⚙️ **Are you someone who uses affirmation and encouraging words to help others? Why or why not?**

As one who serves, what words of encouragement do you offer to your leader? Every group will have nay-sayers. In the story of Jonathan and the Philistines, the story builds to a point where Saul became critical of his own son. Everybody needs a word of encouragement. Often it does not matter from whom the word of encouragement comes.

Serving generally follows the form of one's gifts and talents. There is always a place to serve. A team of men changing the oil for elders in the church is servanthood in action. The lady who volunteers to serve in the church nursery allowing parents to get more out of church is a prime example of service. Cooking a healthy meal for delivery to elders is service. Serving is seldom elaborate. It always begins right where we are.

Finish

Service or servanthood is not something one has to go a far distance to accomplish. It generally begins at home, serving one's family. It then expands to God's church and beyond that to the community. Servanthood begins where one is.

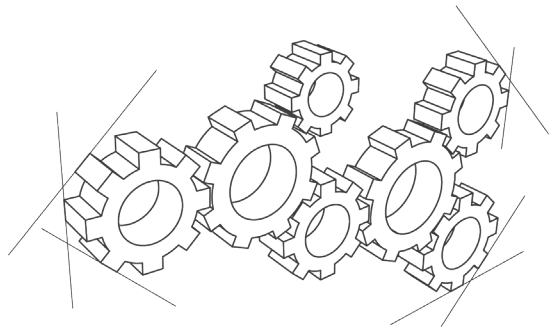
Albert Schweitzer was one of the most famous missionaries of the modern era. Leaving behind both an academic career (Schweitzer had PhD's in both theology and physics) and a musical one (Schweitzer was also a concert organist), he set up a medical clinic in French Equatorial Africa. Schweitzer was eighty-five years old when Andrew Davison of Colgate Rochester Seminary had the privilege of visiting that clinic.

Davison tells how one morning, at around eleven o'clock, he, Schweitzer, and some others were walking up a hill. It was extremely hot. Suddenly the eighty-five-year-old Dr. Schweitzer walked away from the group. He made his way toward an African woman struggling up the hill with a large load of wood for the cooking fires. Schweitzer took the entire load of wood from the woman and carried it up the hill for her.

When Schweitzer rejoined the group, one of them asked why he did things like that. The group was surprised and concerned that a person of Dr. Schweitzer's age would strain himself so. Dr. Schweitzer looked at the group and then pointed to the woman and said, "No one should ever have to carry a burden like that alone."

(Story taken from the book *When the World Takes the Wind out of Your Sails* by James W. Moore.)

Small Group Leader's Guide



The Upside-Down Pyramid: *The Identity of a Servant*

Opening Question: Since we often feel either older or younger than we actually are, what age do you feel right now? Why?

Scripture Focus: Romans 1:1

Tell the story of the rich woman and the flight attendant on page 78.

Group Discussion:

- What traits or behaviors do you imagine when you think of a servant? ⚙️
- Who comes to your mind when you think of someone who demonstrates servanthood? Why?
- How have words spoken by others positively impacted your life?
- Do you normally view yourself as a “servant of Jesus Christ”? Why or why not?
- Why is an attitude of serving countercultural? ⚙️
- What does it mean to be a good follower?
- Are you someone who uses affirmation and encouraging words to help others? Why or why not?
- What does it mean to have a heart to serve? ⚙️
- Why do some see submissiveness as a negative trait?
- How do you know if service to God is a priority in someone’s life?
- How is the priority of service seen in your own life?
- Why should serving be a priority in the life of the believer? ⚙️
- Do you consider yourself a gifted or talented person? Why or why not?
- Is it wrong to believe that you have been greatly gifted by God? Why or why not?
- What are some gifts and talents you are using for the kingdom of God? ⚙️

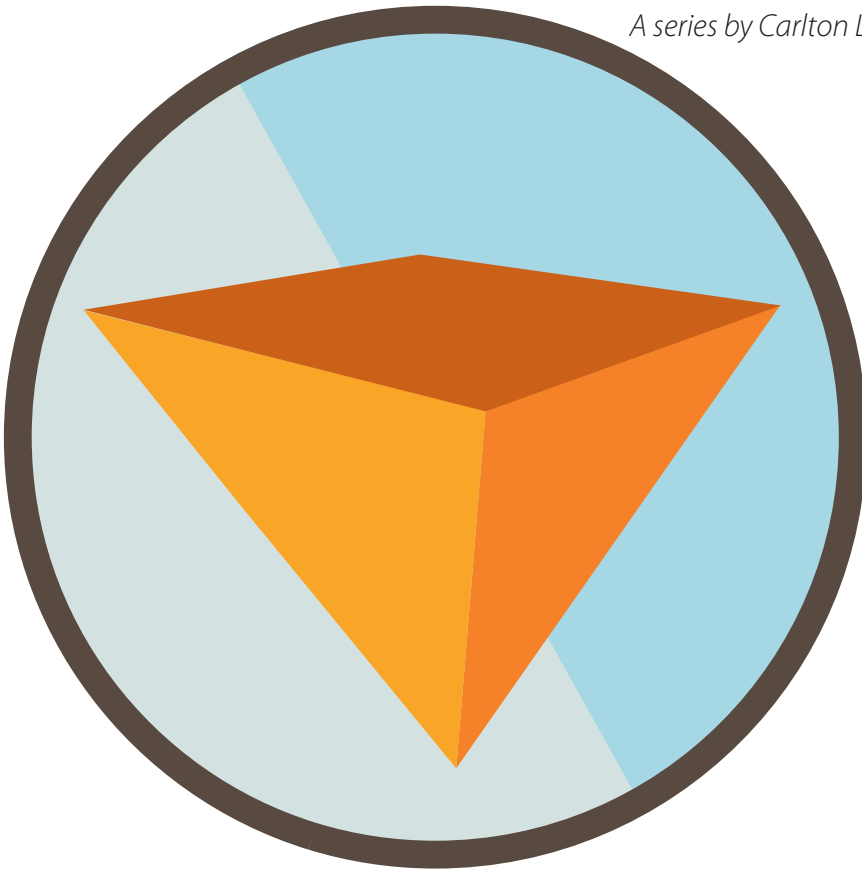
Prayer Focus

Lord, I will serve You with all my heart. I submit my will to You and Your purpose for my life.
Lord, serving You is a priority in my life. Help me to become an encourager. I want to use my gifts and talents for Your kingdom.

YOUTH

The Upside-Down Pyramid

A series by Carlton L. Coon, Sr.



SERIES BIG IDEA

Because Jesus lived His life as a servant, as His followers, we are called to do the same.

Lesson 3.1

The Identity of a Servant

Lesson 3.2

Looking Out for Number One

Lesson 3.3

The Perils of Servanthood

Lesson 3.4

The Rewards of Servanthood

The Upside-Down Pyramid

The Identity of a Servant

BLUEPRINT

SERIES BIG IDEA

Because Jesus lived His life as a servant, as His followers, we are called to do the same.

LESSON BIG IDEA

Because we have been called to serve, we should take on the identity of a servant.

LEARNING TARGET

To realize that what we do and what actions we take define who we really are.

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Romans 1:1

SUPPLIES

snack for class, items for “pampering” students such as hot towels

FOUNDATION

In *Perilous Pursuits*, Joseph Stowell shared the story of a friend who was flying coast to coast. Circumstances had allowed the friend to be upgraded to a first-class ticket. As the traveler reclined in the comfort of his leather seat, he noticed that across the aisle from him was an older couple who were obviously very wealthy—“old money,” as they say.

As the flight began, a flight attendant made her way down the aisle and said to this older woman, “Ma’am, would you like a pillow?” The older lady looked straight ahead without answering. Thinking that perhaps the plane’s engines were a little too loud, the flight attendant raised her voice and repeated her question. Still no response.

So assuming the woman was hearing-impaired, the attendant said in a voice that could be heard throughout the first-class cabin, “Ma’am, would you like a pillow?”

At this point the husband turned to the flight attendant and said, “You’ll have to excuse my wife. She doesn’t speak to servants.”

(Story comes from Joseph Stowell, *Perilous Pursuits: Overcoming Our Obsession with Significance*.)

How that remark must have hurt the flight attendant! I doubt she smilingly went to tell her colleagues, “Someone has finally recognized my true identity!” I expect the flight attendant was deeply offended.

By contrast, in Scripture one can often see the value and significance of those who simply serve. Such an instance is in 1 Samuel 14.

Opening Discussion

- Who comes to your mind when you think of someone who demonstrates servanthood? Why?
- What are some gifts and talents you are using for the kingdom of God?

LESSON BIG IDEA: Realizing Our Identity

Middle-School Exercise

1. Serve your students. There is no better way to start off this unit than actively displaying servitude in action.
2. Prepare a snack of your choosing for the class.
3. Go out of your way to do something special for each and everyone in the class.
4. Encourage the class to do something nice for one another before dismissal.



Senior-High Exercise

1. Provide a snack or treat for your class.
2. Go out of your way to take care of trash or gathering supplies.
3. Do everything you can to exemplify the role of a servant.
4. You can also be a little extreme to the point of “pampering” your students as an exercise to show them what the role of a historical servant might be.
5. Ask the students how it felt to be served and cared for at every turn. Discuss.

✳ *Have one or two of your students share some personal stories of times in which they were either served unexpectedly, or times in which they went out of their way to serve others.*

FRAME

I. Jonathan and the Armorbearer

- A. The Philistines went on the attack to discourage Saul and Israel's rebellion.
1. There was great peril to the young nation of Israel. Every advantage lay with the Philistines. Three specific things give context to the situation.
 2. The Israelites had few weapons to use in conflict. When the Philistines threatened attack, the Israelites had no option except to sharpen farm implements to use as weapons. King Saul and his son Jonathan were the only warriors to have either a sword or spear.
 3. Second, the Philistines had a much larger army. The Philistines staged thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen. When Saul finally counted his soldiers, there were only six hundred; six hundred Israelite soldiers armed with shovels, mattocks, and pitchforks against a well-armed and overwhelmingly larger force of Philistines.
 4. Finally, there seems to have been no plan of action. Saul had no strategy in mind. His people were frightened, cowering like animals, and hiding in caves among the rocks. There was a void of direction. Saul's only instructions were to restrain action.
- B. Israel's success and that of Jonathan came with the vital participation of a **servant**.  
1. As noted earlier, Saul's son Jonathan had one of only two real weapons. It seems Jonathan became a bit frustrated with his father Saul's mandate to sit and wait. Finally, Jonathan said to his military servant, “Let's go over to the garrison of the Philistines.” In this instance the servant actually had the role of being Jonathan's armorbearer.
 2. An armorbearer served a notable warrior like Jonathan by carrying that warrior's weapons. Regardless of how important that role was, the person who carried it out was still only a servant.
 3. Jonathan did not tell Saul of his plan to go up against the Philistines. Jonathan's only conversation about what he was planning was with this unnamed servant.

C. *Read 1 Samuel 14:6-7.* 

D. Not only was Jonathan committed to action, so also was his armorbearer.

1. The servant went so far as to indicate a knowledge of Jonathan's heart and a willingness to serve on the basis of what he envisioned as being in Jonathan's heart.
2. The armorbearer could have argued against Jonathan's risky plan, or perhaps the armorbearer could have communicated with Saul and told the king of Jonathan's risky plan.
3. Instead of doing anything to protect himself or to dissuade Jonathan from a seemingly foolish course, the servant responded, "Do what is in your heart." With that statement the servant was committing himself to serve regardless of the outcome.

II. The Selfless Servant

A. A servant of Jesus turns the pyramid of **selfishness** and self-interest upside down.  

1. Such commitment is not relegated to a few hours on Sunday. It is a dedication to follow Jesus wherever He leads. It is important to realize that serving is not a matter of convenience. One cannot say, "I have a servant's heart and soul" and then not take action in their master's cause.
2. Jonathan's servant not only made a verbal commitment, he followed through. His behavior identified his commitment. One's behavior in service is always more important than what one says about service.


B. Service can be given, not only in action, but also in the manner of one's conversation.

1. The armorbearer may be unknown to us, but to Jonathan, his service in commitment to Jonathan's cause and the spoken words of encouragement would have had great meaning.
2. A supportive word is one of those words fitly spoken; its value is like apples of gold.

C. *Read Proverbs 25:11.*

D. A person's self-declaration is important because it usually defines what one feels to be important about oneself.

1. Paul introduced himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ." In writing to the church at Rome, Paul was addressing people he did not know well. Many of the saints in Rome would have been total strangers to Paul.
2. Paul saw himself first as a servant! Whether or not Paul was called to any further role, he was "a servant of Jesus Christ."
3. Across history, servanthood was marked by loss of freedom, limited income, and lack of social status.
4. No one wants to be a servant. No one today in North America raises children with the hopes that they will become servants.

 *Why do some people talk about service and yet do not regularly serve?*

 *How have words spoken by others positively impacted your life?*

E. In Christianity, **servanthood** is non-negotiable.  



1. Any who follow Christ should not wait for a call to be a servant. Each disciple of Jesus Christ is simply to be a servant of Jesus!
2. In this upside-down world of Christianity, believers could and should think of themselves in this way: as servants of Jesus Christ!

F. Servanthood is seldom easy and generally countercultural.

1. Paul, an apostle, defined himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. Jonathan's armorbearer went past what might have been rationally expected to support Jonathan in attacking the Philistines. Paul could have first presented himself as an apostle, but he chose not to. Jonathan's servant could have looked for some other option, but he chose not to.
2. The concept of servanthood is an over-arching premise of godly living. Servanthood seems contrary to any idea of success, of gaining influence, or making an impact in the world.

LESSON BIG IDEA: Realizing Our Identity


3. Yet in biblical experience, servanthood is the common approach to all things meaningful. As far as God is concerned, greatness is measured with the yardstick of service. Those who serve others become the impact makers of their time.


G. Servanthood is a **priority**.  


1. For Paul, seeing himself in this way and being known by others as a servant was a priority.
2. It must also take precedence for each Christian.

H. Servanthood is fellowship.

1. Much is written about leadership, but all who lead must also follow. Paul was known as a leader of the church, but he wanted all to know that he was first a servant of Jesus Christ.
2. Paul saw himself as a follower, a servant. Serving Jesus always involves being a good follower.

 *Do you normally view yourself as a “servant of Jesus Christ?” Why or why not?*

 *What does it mean to be a good follower?*

 *This would be an excellent time for a personal testimony. Alternatively, consider asking ahead of time for a volunteer in the class to share his or her story.*

III. Using Your Gifts and Talents

A. **Servants** take action!  

1. As wonderful as the verbal and emotional encouragement may have been, Jonathan needed the servant’s hands. Jonathan needed the armorbearer to carry his weapons and be available in the skirmish with the Philistines.
2. A person who says he is committed to Christ but does nothing to advance His cause either does not understand what it really means to be a servant or is not being totally honest. One’s actions follow one’s heart.
3. If a person has a servant’s heart, he will act as a servant.

B. Servants can encourage.

1. The supportive words of Jonathan’s armorbearer had value for Jonathan as the two of them faced a difficult challenge. Our words can make such a difference to others, including those who lead us or whom we serve alongside.
2. Jonathan’s armorbearer’s words would have supported Jonathan and helped keep Jonathan on his feet. Can the same be said of your words?

C. Serving generally follows the form of one’s gifts and talents.

1. There is always a place to serve. A team of men changing the oil for widows or single ladies in the church is servanthood in action.
2. The lady who volunteers to serve in the church nursery, allowing parents to get more out of church, is a prime example of service. Cooking a healthy meal for delivery to elders is service.
3. Serving is seldom elaborate. It always begins right where we are.

FINISH

Service or servanthood is not something one has to go a far distance to accomplish. It generally begins at home, serving one's family. It then expands to God's church and beyond that to the community. Servanthood begins where one is at.

Albert Schweitzer was one of the most famous missionaries of the modern era. Leaving behind both an academic career (Schweitzer had PhDs in both theology and physics) and a musical one (Schweitzer was also a concert organist), he set up a medical clinic in French Equatorial Africa. He was eighty-five years old when Andrew Davison of Colgate Rochester Seminary had the privilege of visiting.

Davison tells how one morning at around eleven o'clock, he, Schweitzer, and some others were walking up a hill. It was extremely hot. Suddenly the eighty-five-year-old Dr. Schweitzer walked away from the group. He made his way toward an African woman struggling up the hill with a large load of wood for the cooking fires. Schweitzer took the entire load of wood from the woman and carried it up the hill for her.

When Schweitzer rejoined the group, one of them asked why he did things like that. The group was surprised and concerned that a person of Dr. Schweitzer's age would strain himself so. Dr. Schweitzer looked at the group and then pointed to the woman and said, "No one should ever have to carry a burden like that alone."

(Story taken from the book *When the World Takes the Wind out of Your Sails* by James W. Moore.)

Discussion Questions:

- Are you someone who uses affirmation and encouraging words to help others? Why or why not?

Middle-School Finish:

1. Discuss the role of a servant.
2. What prominent figures in the Bible were servants?
3. What were their roles?
4. Were they important to God?
5. Did they do great things for God?
6. With understanding of the great servants in the Bible, how does it affect your perception of personally serving others?

Senior-High Finish:


1. Discuss the idea of a pyramid scheme in business.
2. How is the one at the top of the pyramid affected?
3. What is the role of those at the bottom?
4. How does this impact your understanding of the inverted pyramid?

The Big Picture

- Jesus has called us all to be servants for His cause.
- We should seek to better fulfill the role He has intended for us with the talents and gifts that He has given us.

Final Reflections

- What traits or behaviors do you imagine when you think of a servant?
- Who comes to your mind when you think of someone who demonstrates servanthood? Why?
- Why do you think the servant chose not to talk negatively about Jonathan's decision?
- Was it the right thing to do? Why or why not?

 *Allow students time to share what they have written.*

LESSON BIG IDEA: Realizing Our Identity

SELAH

Using the following points, take this time to guide your students in prayer.

- Lord, help me to serve You with my whole heart, mind, and strength.
- I submit myself to You and Your purposes for my life no matter the cost.
- Help me to make Your will a priority in my life over all else. Help me to be an encourager.
- I want to use my gifts and talents for the good of Your Kingdom.

 *Allow time for students to update their Personal Discipleship Guide.*

CHILDREN

The Upside-Down Pyramid



SERIES BIG IDEA

Because Jesus lived His life as a servant, as His followers, we are called to do the same.

Lesson 3.1

The Identity of a Servant

Lesson 3.2

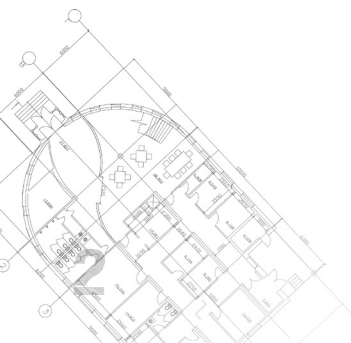
Looking Out for Number One

Lesson 3.3

The Perils of Servanthood

Lesson 3.4

The Rewards of Servanthood





The Upside-Down Pyramid (Servanthood): The Identity of a Servant

BLUEPRINT

SERIES BIG IDEA

Because Jesus lived His life as a servant, as His followers, we are called to do the same.

SERIES MEMORY PASSAGE

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

LESSON BIG IDEA

Because we have been called to serve, we should take on the identity of a servant.

STUDENTS WILL investigate the art of serving and how it can benefit their lives.

Early Elementary (Grades 1-3)

TOOL BOX

FOUNDATION

- PowerPoint 3.1
- *Optional*: parent guests
- *Occupational items*: stethoscope, ruler, hammer, hardhat, police badge, fireman’s hat, gardening tools, etc.
- Hand towel
- Teen guest, white tablecloth, menu, china, crystal, silverware, crackers, juice

FRAME

- Series 3 memory verse poster (TRP)
- 16 paper plates, marker
- Paper placemats or large sheets of construction paper (1 per student), markers or crayons
- *Story props*: 2 toy or balloon swords, shield
- *Visual*: Armor and Armorbearer (TRP)

FINISH

- Activity papers, crayons
- Paper plates (1 per student), markers, glue, strips of paper (1 per student)

SELAH

- Paper towels (1 per student), pens
- Index cards
- *Series song and lyrics*: “Live to Serve”

Late Elementary (Grades 4-6)

TOOL BOX

FOUNDATION

- PowerPoint 3.1
- *Optional*: parent guests
- *Occupational items*: stethoscope, ruler, hammer, hardhat, police badge, fireman’s hat, gardening tools, etc.
- Hand towel
- 2 trays, serving items: 2 plates, 2 cups, 2 forks, 2 spoons

FRAME

- Series 3 memory verse poster (TRP)
- Hand towel from opening activity, optional: candy or snacks
- File folders (1 per student), markers
- *Story props*: 2 toy or balloon swords, shield
- *Visual*: Armor and Armorbearer (TRP)

FINISH

- Activity papers, pencils
- Role playing cards (TRP)


SELAH

- Paper towels (1 per student), pens
- *Song*: “Make Me a Servant” by Maranatha Singers
- Whiteboard, marker
- *Series song and lyrics*: “Live to Serve”

Foundation

Early Elementary (1-3)

Career Day

Display the PowerPoint slide . Share your occupation with students or invite several parents to visit class to share about their jobs.

Display occupational items. Students identify the occupation that each item represents. Discuss each job and how the occupation provides a service. Students brainstorm other service occupations that aren't represented and name a tool that would identify that occupation.

After discussion, show students a towel and ask what the towel represents. Explain to students that when Jesus came to earth, He lived His life as a servant: washing His disciples' feet and dedicating Himself to serving others. As His followers, we are called to do the same. Because we have been called to serve, we should take on the identity of a servant.

Reflection

- **What actions identify us as servants of Jesus Christ?**

Explain to students that just as the tools identify a person's occupation, our lives and actions should identify us as servants of Jesus Christ. For the next few lessons, we will learn what it means to be a servant.

May I Take Your Order?

Prior to class cover a table in the front of the room with a white tablecloth. Set the table with fine china, crystal, and silverware. Invite an older teen to help you during class.

Seat the teen guest and demonstrate how a server in an upscale restaurant would serve the guest. Provide a menu and take the guest's order.

Next give an example of bad service with the same scenario.

After the skit, place crackers and juice on a table. Have students form pairs and then serve juice and crackers to their partners.

Reflection

- **Did you enjoy serving one another? Why or why not?**
- **Why is attitude important when we serve?**
- **How can serving benefit your life?**
- **How does serving benefit others?**

Late Elementary (4-6)

Serving Relay Race

Place a table at one end of the room with the serving items on it: 2 plates, 2 cups, 2 forks, 2 spoons, etc.

Students form two even teams. (If there is an odd number, pick a student to go twice.) Teams line up in two relay lines on the opposite end of the room from the table. Give each team an empty tray.

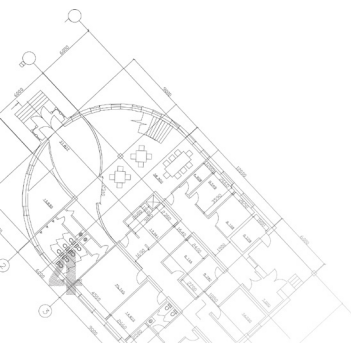
The first student on each team will run to the table and stack one of each item on his tray. The student then runs back to his team, carrying the tray, with one hand behind his back. Once he gets to his team, the next person takes the full tray, carries it with one hand behind her back to the table, and unloads the tray. That student carries the empty tray back to the team and hands it off to the next person. Continue until one team finishes. If you don't have enough students to create teams, just do this activity as one group.

Reflection

Discuss how serving others takes skill. Explain how restaurants are designed to create a relaxing atmosphere where you can enjoy a meal that is served by polite, efficient, trained, and knowledgeable servers.

Discuss how servers are expected to complete their tasks with a smile and a good attitude while meeting your needs.

- **As Christians, how should we greet people we meet?**
- **How is our attitude an indication that we serve Jesus?**



Frame

Early Elementary (1-3)


Late Elementary (4-6)

Memory Verse

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Pass the Plate

Prior to class write the words of the memory verse on sixteen paper plates (three or four words on each plate to make two separate sets). Scramble up the order of each set of plates.

Display the verse (TRP)  and say it together several times.


Have students divide into two even teams, line up shoulder to shoulder, and spread out with two feet of space between each student.

Hand one set of verse plates (out of order) to the first person in line on each team. When you say, “Go!” the first person begins by passing a plate. Students continue to pass each plate to the person on their right, until the last players on each team have all the plates. The last players put the verse in order. The first team to complete the task wins.

Reflection

- **What does the memory verse mean to you?**
- **Who is the “Son of man” in the verse?**
- **Why did Jesus come to earth?**

Service Placemats


Display the memory verse (TRP) . Hand out paper placemats or construction paper and markers or crayons. Have students write the verse on their placemats and also draw ways they can serve others.

Reflection

Explain that even though Jesus is called the King of kings, when He came to earth and began His ministry, He chose the identity of a servant rather than a king.

Discuss how He didn’t live in a palace. He did not socialize with the rich and powerful of society.

Towel Verse

Display the verse (TRP) . Write the verse on the whiteboard. Read the verse together a few times. Then read the verse again, alternating words between the girls and boys. The girls will say the first word, the boys will say the second, and so on. Start the second time with the boys beginning the reading.


After you have read the verse together several times, have students form a circle. Give one student the towel from the opening activity. Have the student begin by reciting the first word of the verse and then passing the towel to the right. Each student will say the next word of the verse as the towel is passed. The student to say the last word of the verse will go to the middle of the circle while the students begin this again. Each time the verse is completed, the student who says the last word will move to the center of the circle.

Teacher Tip Alternative: The student could serve the other students a piece of candy or snack instead of going to the center.

Reflection

- **According to this verse, why did the “Son of man” come to earth?**
- **Why do you think He chose to take on the identity of a servant rather than royalty?**
- **How can we take on the identity of a servant?**

Case Study of a Servant

Display the verse (TRP) . Give each student a file folder and marker. Have students write the verse on the front of their folders and then draw a servant inside their folders. Then have them write the characteristics of a servant next to the drawing, including details of how a servant looks and acts.

Reflection

- **How did Jesus come to earth?**
- **Why do you think Jesus came as a baby even though He was the King of kings?**
- **How do we know Jesus had the attitude of a servant?**

Early Elementary (1-3)

Bible Lesson: *Jonathan's Armorbearer (1 Samuel 14)*

- **What is a shield?**
- **When would you use a shield?**

Show *Armor and Aarmorbearer visual* (TRP) .

The shield protected warriors in battles hundreds of years ago. In the Old Testament, the person who carried the shield of armor for a leader was called the armorbearer. The armorbearer had the important job of protecting the leader at all costs during battle.

Pretend you are a leader headed into battle and you are going to select an armorbearer to protect you. Come up with two requirements you would have for your armorbearer and share them with a partner. *(Let students share and discuss.)*

An armorbearer had to make great sacrifices for the leader, follow the leader into battle, protect the leader, and fight beside the leader. In our lesson today, we will examine an Old Testament account of an armorbearer who faithfully served his leader in battle.

Choose two students to be Jonathan and his armorbearer. Actors perform the movements as you narrate. Give Jonathan a toy or balloon sword; give the armorbearer a shield and sword.

The Philistines were a powerful army that came against the Israelites. King Saul, king of the Israelites, was camped near the location of the Philistine army. Alert and armed, they were ready for battle!

Jonathan, the king's son, decided to attack the Philistine army. He had faith that God was powerful enough to defeat the army. He turned to the young man who was his armorbearer and explained his plan to attack the Philistines.

The armorbearer told Jonathan, "I am with you, heart and soul." This meant he was prepared to serve Jonathan.

Late Elementary (4-6)

Jonathan and the armorbearer marched to the Philistine camp. When they were close, Jonathan told the armorbearer that they would wait for a sign before they attacked. If the Philistines called them up to the campsite, that would be a sign God would deliver the Philistines into their hands.

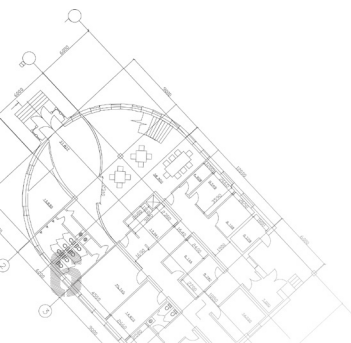
As they arrived at the base of the camp, they heard the Philistines calling to them. When Jonathan heard them call, he knew it was time to attack the army. He and his armorbearer scrambled up the hill.

Once at the top, Jonathan took his sword and fought the mighty army. He turned and looked behind him as he fought and saw his armorbearer fighting and serving behind him. *(Actors play fight an invisible army with swords and shield.)* The two of them defeated twenty Philistines in just the first few minutes. Then the ground started to shake and the Philistines panicked. *(Students stomp their feet or pat their hands on their legs to create the sound effects.)*

This commotion alerted the Israelites back at Saul's camp. Saul quickly counted his warriors to see who was absent, and he realized Jonathan and his armorbearer were gone. The Israelites rushed to the scene of the battle and discovered the Philistines fleeing and killing each other! That day God delivered Israel from the Philistine army because Jonathan and his armorbearer were willing to serve their kingdom.

Discussion Questions:

- **How did Jonathan show wisdom in attacking the Philistines?**
- **How did Jonathan's armorbearer show that he was a true servant? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.**
- **What rewards did the armorbearer receive for serving Jonathan?**
- **How can you serve others in your life?**



Finish

Early Elementary (1-3)

Late Elementary (4-6)

Family Connection

Review the instructions for page two of the activity paper—Family Connection—and give students a chance to discuss how they will carry out this assignment. If your class has consistent attendance, consider offering a reward for those who return the Family Connection. Provide time in the class to discuss the activity.

Activity Paper: *Armorbearer*

On the shield, ask students to draw ways they will serve others.

A Servant's Shield

Hand out paper plates and washable markers. Instruct students to write a fact they learned from today's lesson on the fronts of their plates. On the backs students draw a picture of a servant in God's kingdom helping someone and color the plate to make a shield. Give each student a paper strip to glue to the plate as a handle.

Activity Paper: *Called to Serve*

On the shield, ask students to write some ways they can serve in God's kingdom.


Role Playing Activity

Students demonstrate ways to serve in God's kingdom by examining each scenario depicted on the role playing cards (TRP). As a group (or two groups if you have a large class), students read each scenario and then act out ways to serve in that scenario.

Selah

Early Elementary (1-3)

Prayer

Pray with students . Students form pairs. Give each student a paper towel and a pen. Students write ways to serve God and others on the towel.

Students pray for one another for God to help them have a servant attitude.

Reflection

- **Is it easy to be a servant? Why or why not?**
- **How can you serve others through prayer?**

Occupation Prayers

Write names of occupations discussed at the beginning of the lesson on index cards. (Nurse, doctor, police officer, carpenter, teacher, and so on.)

Have students form small groups. Hand out a few cards to each group. A member from each group reads the card and leads the group in prayer for those who serve in that occupation.

Instruct students to pray specifically for those in the church who serve others.

Reflection

- **How can we serve God and others on a daily basis?**
- **Does it please God when we serve others in our community? Why or why not?**

Late Elementary (4-6)

Make Me a Servant

Play the song by Maranatha Singers, "Make Me a Servant." Suggested link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rznoe3zKxM>

Reflection

- **What qualities is this person asking God to give her?**
- **What are some characteristics of a servant?**
- **Do you have those same qualities in your life?**
- **Is there anything in your life that you need to change in order to take on the identity of a true servant?**

Play the song again and instruct students to think about characteristics that make a good servant. Write student responses on a whiteboard.

Finalize lesson with class prayer. Students ask Jesus to help them model His servant attributes.

