

## Respond to the call to serve: *What is enough?*

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

#### Facilitator Notes:

#### I wonder...

- What does it mean to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind?
- What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?

#### I believe...

- Fulfilling Jesus' commandments is not easy. God wants my best, deserves my best, and demands my best. I must fully devote my life to Him, and pray for His grace to cover me where I fall short.
- Loving my neighbor means looking for opportunities to serve them, and sometimes that might mean buying and accumulating a little less for myself, so I have more to give.

#### Materials:

- Paper
- Writing utensils
- IGNITE Bible
- *Giving is love* video on YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6WXNlUsjNo>

#### References:

- Bible: Malachi 1:6-14, Matthew 16:24-25, Luke 8:4-15, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 13:2-8

### PRE DISCUSSION MESSAGE TO PARENTS AND STUDENT (TO BE SENT VIA EMAIL OR TEXT)

What do Jesus' two commandments mean to you? Come join us in small group as we dig deeper at \_\_\_\_\_.

### POST DISCUSSION MESSAGE TO PARENTS (TO BE SENT VIA EMAIL OR TEXT)

#### Facilitator Notes:

- Please keep the main message intact, but feel free to add local information as necessary.

Dear Parents,  
 This week the "I Wonder..." questions were about how much is enough to give to God. Discuss with your student what you as a family currently give (to charities, etc.). This doesn't necessarily mean you have to talk about exact dollar amounts. As a family, discuss how you could use your resources to better serve God and others. As always, if you have questions about the topic, please feel free to contact us.

Your Youth Leaders

### SUNDAY SERMON REFLECTIONS (up to 10 minutes)

<p><b>Facilitator Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow 2-3 students to share their reflections. For larger groups, vary who shares from week to week.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What Bible verse was used for the basis of last Sunday's sermon?</li> <li>➤ What were some of the main takeaways? What did you learn?</li> <li>➤ So far this week, how have you applied what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?</li> <li>➤ Going forward, how will you apply what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?</li> </ul>
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### HOOK (up to 10 minutes)

<p><b>Facilitator Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow 2-3 students to share their reflections. For larger groups, vary who shares from week to week.</li> <li>This hook activity helps the students to begin to understand how we should respond to God's love.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are you and how are you feeling today?</li> <li>Who would like to share their point to ponder or call to action from last week?</li> <li>➤ Watch the <i>Giving is love</i> video:  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6WXNlUsjNo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6WXNlUsjNo</a></li> <li>➤ Ask the students what they think of this phrase from the video: <i>our giving is a reflection of who we are.</i></li> </ul>
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### SET THE STAGE (1 minute)

<p><b>Facilitator Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preview the "I wonder" questions with the students.</li> </ul>	<p><b>I wonder...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What does it mean to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind?</li> <li>➤ What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?</li> </ul>
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### LESSON (up to 25 minutes)

<p><b>Facilitator Notes:</b></p>	<p><b>Student Question #1 How do you respond to God's love?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ We might first think of going to church, putting in an offering, praying to Him, reading Christian books, or going to youth activities. However, if you stripped all that away, at the core of your being – what do you think about God? How do you respond to Him?</li> <li>➤ Read the parable of the sower in Luke 8:4-15.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This parable is about different people responding to God in different ways. Some responded to the seed of God's word in obedience, and were fruitful. Some were growing for a while, but when things got difficult, they gave up. Some were following, but then they were caught up in cares and material things of the world.</li> <li>○ After reading the parable of the sower and Jesus' explanation of it, which type of soil do you think best describes you right now? Why?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We might live thinking that God doesn't really expect a lot of us, but Scripture tells a different story. There are many warnings about thinking you're committed when you're really not.</li> <li>➤ In the book of Malachi, God clearly addresses the idea of half-hearted worship. The people of Israel were just going through the religious motions. Their activities kind of looks like ours: going to church, offering sacrifices, saying prayers, etc.</li> <li>➤ Read Malachi 1:6-14 together. Try to picture it. What were God's people doing in the passage? How might their actions translate to what church looks like for us today? Pay attention to how God responds.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ According to Malachi 1, what were the Israelites doing wrong in their approach to God? Why was this such a big deal?</li> <li>○ In this passage, how does God respond to their half-hearted sacrifices?</li> <li>○ We don't make animal sacrifices anymore, but we would be wise to heed this warning. In what ways do you think we may be in danger of making the same mistakes that the Israelites made?</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ This story is a shocking wake-up call for anyone who believes that something is better than nothing, or that "checking the boxes" is enough.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Matthew 16:24-25:</b> Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."</li> </ul>	<p><b>Student Question #2 What does it mean to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ God is our Creator. He loves us and died for us, even as we continually sin and turn away from Him. When we look at everything in light of His love, our mediocre response is exactly what God calls it in Malachi 1: evil.</li> <li>➤ Are we really committed to God? Or do we spend our best time and energy on ourselves and then just give Him what's left over at the end of the day?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Would you say that you are guilty of serving "leftovers" to God? How so, or why not?</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Jesus is not vague about what He calls us to. Read Matthew 16:24-25.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What does it mean to take up your cross and follow Jesus? What do you think Matthew thought those words meant when he wrote them down?                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can give many excuses to postpone serving Jesus, because of a particular "cross" or inconvenience in our lives at the moment. This verse is saying that we have to take up that cross and follow Him anyways. There will never be a perfect time to serve the Lord.</li> <li>○ Being as practical as possible, describe some of the ways that taking up your cross and following Jesus might play out in your unique setting.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Following Jesus isn't about being perfect. God, in His infinite love and grace, forgives and covers us when we fail. It is about living a life of obedience and surrender where we let go of everything and truly offer it to God, not just on Sunday mornings, but anywhere and everywhere we go.</li> </ul>



- You may find it useful to work through each sentence of the quote with the students to be sure they understand it.
- **Romans 12:1:** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.
- If you would like more background information on the quote, please see the article at the end of this lesson.

**Student Question #3 What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?**

Read the following quote to the students and discuss:

- *We're not giving what we're called to give, unless that giving affects how we live – affects what we put on our plate and where we make our home and hang our hat and what kind of threads we've got to have on our back. "Surplus giving" is the leftover you can afford to give; "sacrificial giving" is the love gift that changes how you live – because the love of Christ has changed you. God doesn't want your leftovers. God wants...your first-overs, because He is your first love. (Ann Voskamp)*
  - How could we give so that it affects our lives?
  - What are we saying to God with our sacrifices?
  - What are we saying to others that we serve and give to?
  - How do the ideas in this quote relate to Romans 12:1, which we discussed in our last lesson?
- When we give and serve others with our best, with love, we are saying to them, "You are valuable. You are worthy of the best."

**WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME? (up to 10 minutes)**

**Facilitator Notes:**

**Wrap up the lesson with challenging the students to really think about what a life committed to Christ looks like.**

**Close with the "I Wonder..." questions**

- Ask a student to read an "I Wonder..." question, and invite another student to answer with an "I Believe..." statement or an "I Believe..." statement in their own words.
- As you review each question and answer, stop and check in with the group to be sure there are no misunderstandings or misconceptions.
- Remind the students that on their Confirmation day, they will or have already promised and committed to surrendering themselves to God in belief and obedience.

**I wonder...**

- What does it mean to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind?
- What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?

**I believe...**

- Fulfilling Jesus' commandments is not easy. God wants my best, deserves my best, and demands my best. I must fully devote my life to Him, and pray for His grace to cover me where I fall short.
- Loving my neighbor means looking for opportunities to serve them, and sometimes that might mean buying and accumulating a little less for myself, so I have more to give.

**Point to Ponder...**

- Is there such a thing as "easy Christianity"?

**A Call to Action...**

- Take a few moments alone with God to think earnestly, and journal about the following questions: *Am I willing to say to God that He can have whatever He wants? Do I believe that wholehearted commitment to Him is more important than any other thing or person in my life? Do I believe that nothing I do in this life will ever matter unless it is about loving God and loving the people He has made?*

### Weekly Reflections

What Bible verse was used for the basis of last Sunday's sermon?

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What were some of the main takeaways? What did you learn?

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So far this week, how have you applied what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?

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Going forward, how will you apply what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?

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**Point to Ponder...**

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**Call to Action...**

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## Respond to the call to serve: *What is enough?*

<b>I wonder...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What does it mean to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind?</li> <li>➤ What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?</li> </ul>	<b>I believe...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Fulfilling Jesus' commandments is not easy. God wants my best, deserves my best, and demands my best. I must fully devote my life to Him, and pray for His grace to cover me where I fall short.</li> <li>➤ Loving my neighbor means looking for opportunities to serve them, and sometimes that might mean buying and accumulating a little less for myself, so I have more to give.</li> </ul>
<b>References:</b> Malachi 1:6-14, Matthew 16:24-25, Luke 8:4-15, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 13:2-8	

### 1. How do you respond to God's love?

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### 2. What does it mean to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind?

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### 3. What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?

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**Point to Ponder:** Is there such a thing as "easy Christianity"?

**Call to Action:** Take a few moments alone with God to think earnestly, and journal about the following questions: *Am I willing to say to God that He can have whatever He wants? Do I believe that wholehearted commitment to Him is more important than any other thing or person in my life? Do I believe that nothing I do in this life will ever matter unless it is about loving God and loving the people He has made?*

## DEAR WORLD: LET'S STOP GIVING OUR CRAP TO THE POOR

I was getting ready to leave for a trip to Kenya a couple of years ago, when a church emailed and asked if Mercy House had any specific needs. I quickly responded and told them I wanted to give Maureen, our Kenyan Director, an iPhone, so we could communicate during (almost weekly) power outages. I told them if they would buy one instead, we could use the money for other needed items.

On the church's Facebook feed a few days later, I saw an appeal that said something like, "We want to support a ministry with a used iPhone. If you have an old one you can donate, please let us know." I was given an older iPhone a week later. On the ground in Kenya, I realized it wouldn't hold a charge for more than 10 minutes. The phone was junk.

So, when I left Kenya, I gave Maureen my used one that worked.

The church contacted me after the trip and asked how Maureen liked her new phone? I told them it was useless and said, "Don't worry about it. I gave her mine." "Oh, we feel badly, please let us replace your phone! We want to buy you a brand new one, an upgrade. You deserve it," I told them I used my husband's upgrade and already had a replacement phone. "Ok. Instead we would like to write you a \$500 check for the inconvenience."

"Give it to Maureen," I said.

And they did. While the church tried to make it right, I was bothered by the fact they were more than willing to buy me a new phone I didn't need. I have noticed this mentality permeates the Church as a whole: *The poor will be happy with our leftovers. They don't know any better. They live in Africa or Honduras, they don't need the latest technology or the best brands like we do. They will appreciate anything we give because something is more than nothing.*

**Why do we give others – often those in service to the poor or the poor themselves – something we wouldn't keep or give ourselves?**

Somehow collecting clothes for immigrants has become the perfect opportunity to get rid of stuff we don't want and gathering baby items for new moms is the perfect excuse to toss out stained and worn clothing we wouldn't dare use again. I've packed suitcases with beautiful donations, but mostly I've pilfered through piles of junk donated in the name of Jesus.

**It's time to stop giving our crap to the poor.**

There's nothing wrong with used or secondhand. It's often my first and favorite choice. Many organizations and ministries depend on used gifts. But if we give used, it should be our best. I'm not saying when we clean out older clothes or toys or things we don't use any longer and donate them – that this is wrong. I am saying if we give it away, it should be something we would use ourselves.

The poor may not have wealth, but they have dignity. I've met people without electricity or running water who swept their dirt floors daily, pressed their clothes neatly, walked miles to work

on muddy roads, dodging sewage and never had a speck of dirt on them. They value their own worth, we should too.

I'll never forget meeting a woman in Africa who supported her large family by reselling used clothes from America. But when she held up clothes to show me what was for sale – clothes Americans had donated in clothing drives – they were tattered and stained. I was embarrassed. Her *best* depended on our *worst*.

Just because our donation feels like we are helping, in reality, we could be hurting. Bales of used clothes are sold to African countries for resale and they end up flooding the market and often put local textile businesses and seamstresses out of business.

It's time to think about not only what we give and how we give it, but also why we give it. Just because it makes us feel better (and cleans out our garage at the same time), doesn't mean it's the best for those in need. Perhaps we should look a little deeper into our hearts and wallets when we can say, I don't have money to give to the poor, but I have a lot of stuff. Maybe we need to buy less stuff, so we have more to give?

*"We're not giving what we're called to give, unless that giving affects how we live – affects what we put on our plate and where we make our home and hang our hat and what kind of threads we've got to have on our back. Surplus Giving is the leftover you can afford to give; Sacrificial Giving is the love gift that changes how you live – because the love of Christ has changed you. God doesn't want your leftovers. God wants your love overtures, your first-overs, because He is your first love." - Ann Voskamp*

There have been times over the years, I've gasped and grinned at the beautiful items I've sorted and packed for the impoverished. When we give our best, we are living our best. We are saying with our donation, *you are valuable*. We are whispering with our gift, *you are worthy of the best*. We have the opportunity to speak self-worth when we give generously.

**It's a promise for them. It's a promise for us.**

*"Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed." - Proverbs 19:17*

The next time we have the opportunity to share what we have with someone who is in need. Let's give from the pile we want to keep, not from the one we want to throw out.

- by Kristen / October 13, 2014 / [www.wearethatfamily.com](http://www.wearethatfamily.com)