
Session: Community Serving

Description

Some time back, a prominent young politician announced that he was not going to run for another term. He talked about his family and his choice to spend more time with them. This announcement was covered in the news and on social media platforms. When I heard his reason for this choice, I felt a sense of kinship with him. I was happy that he had chosen a healthy family over a career that was taking him away from them.

But very quickly, my joy for him turned into dread. As I watched the social media feeds, while some people thanked him for his service and celebrated this choice with him others made comments like “Don’t let the door hit you on the way out” or “You are a liar”. Regardless of political affiliation I had to turn it off. The meanness and divisiveness were literally making me sick to my stomach.

Sadly, this is where we are today – a divided people. In many cases our “communities” are choosing sides rather than living our lives as one community of people created in the image of God. As families, neighbors, countrymen and global citizens we will naturally disagree on different issues. That’s a good thing, it creates balance and diversity. But we’ve forgotten how to respectfully work through our issues for the betterment of the whole. We don’t have to hate someone because we disagree with them.

Colossians 3:12 speaks to this, “Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.” In these verses, Paul is describing people who live out shalom! He isn’t listing virtues or being abstract, I believe he is being literal.

If we take the time to notice, as humans we are much more alike than we are different. It’s one thing to believe something, it’s another thing to live it out. Unconditional love isn’t holding a joystick wanting to control what others do and think and feel. Unconditional love and solidarity is about noticing the “other”, whatever “other” might mean for us, and choosing to foster wellbeing through our words and actions. Sometimes that can start by finding a common goal.

In this session in the spirit of reaching out to the “other” you are going to find a serving activity to do in your community. You can do this with just your immediate family, or you can invite others in your neighborhood to join you.

Materials Needed

None

Handouts

None

Community Serving

Read aloud the quote or
scripture

“Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.”

— Stephen R. Covey

Questions for discussion
(10 minutes)

1. What do you think it means to respectfully disagree? Explain.
2. How would you come to a joint decision on something important when you disagree with the other person?
3. Do you think God has thoughts about our political parties? Explain. Do you think the church should be involved in politics? Explain.
4. Do you think God wants us to behave as Jesus did, as one who is, “gentle and humble in spirit”? How might we approach disagreements with gentleness and humility?
5. What role (if any) should empathy play as we interact with someone we view as different from us? Explain.

Rule of life activity

Community Serving

1. Research some serving / volunteer activities available in your community that you can do as a family.
2. Try to choose a serving activity where you might meet some people who are different than you in some way.
3. Decide on an activity and then discuss whether you might like to invite other people in your neighborhood to join you.
4. Make the arrangements for your serving day and put it on the calendar. Invite your neighbors if you’ve decided to serve with others.
5. For ideas, check out the “Serving Ideas” section at the bottom of this session or others.
6. Once you have finished your serving day, use the Examen below to discuss how it went.
7. Discuss also whether you learned anything? Did you meet anyone who you considered to be different than you? What was that like?
8. If you would like to do it again, come up with a plan and put it on the calendar.

Examen

How did it go? Debrief highs and lows

1. Each person shares their favorite part of the conversation / activity and why.
2. Each person shares their least favorite part and why.
3. Did you do a Serving/Giving activity last week? How did it go?

Serving /giving ideas for any time this week: Choose one or create your own. These can be done individually or as a group. You will be sharing your serving experience in the next session.

- Sign up to serve food or provide blankets and socks to people who live outdoors.
- Sign up to read with elementary school students once a week in a Title One School.
- Contact a different faith tradition and ask if you can serve /volunteer with their members in some way.
- Volunteer with a nonprofit that serves people with special needs.
- Volunteer to serve at a global humanitarian organization.

ⁱ Definition of the word shalom. Peace – Also: completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony.