

LifeGroup Leader Discussion Guide

Hidden in Plain Sight

20260517

Key Verse: Matthew 25:40 — “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” NIV

Sermon Summary

We all want to make a big difference, but we often overlook the impact of everyday interactions. True service shifts from a chore into a meaningful encounter when we realize that showing up for others is one of the most direct ways to connect with God. Through our city-wide Big Serve initiative, we aren't just partnering with local organizations to serve the vulnerable—we are actively looking for and encountering Jesus, who is often hidden in plain sight.

Leader Preparation Notes

Main Goal

Help the group move beyond viewing service as charity or volunteering and toward seeing service as an encounter with Jesus Himself.

Tone to Set

- Reflective rather than guilt-driven
- Invitational rather than performative
- Focused on spiritual formation, not just social action

Helpful Reminder for Leaders

Some participants may feel uncomfortable discussing service because they feel inadequate, too busy, or unsure where to start. Keep emphasizing that Jesus notices faithfulness in ordinary moments—not just large acts of sacrifice.

Opening Prayer

“Jesus, open our eyes to see You in the people around us. Teach us to serve with humility, compassion, and love—not for recognition, but because we want to become more like You. Amen.”

Icebreaker

Share about a small act of kindness someone showed you that unexpectedly meant a lot. Why did it stay with you?

Discussion Questions & Leader Insights

1. What ideas from the sermon caught your attention?

Leader Insight

This opening question helps people process personally before diving into deeper theology. Listen for recurring themes:

- Seeing Jesus in others
- Everyday faithfulness
- Service as worship
- Slowing down enough to notice people

Follow-Up Prompts

- What challenged you most?
 - Was there a story or statement that stayed with you?
 - Did anything change how you think about serving?
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2. Read Genesis 1:27.

The Bible teaches that every single human being is created in the image of God (Imago Dei). If the best place to catch a glimpse of God's character is by looking at other people, how should this truth change the way we interact with strangers, coworkers, or neighbors on a daily basis?

Leader Insight

“Imago Dei” means every person carries inherent dignity and value. This challenges:

- Dismissing people based on appearance or status
- Treating people as interruptions
- Seeing others only through political, economic, or social labels

The point is not that every person perfectly reflects God’s character, but that every person bears His image and therefore deserves honour.

Key Direction

Encourage practical examples:

- Listening more attentively
- Showing patience
- Refusing to dehumanize difficult people
- Seeing overlooked individuals as sacred

Optional Follow-Up

- Which types of people are easiest for you to overlook?
 - How would your workplace or neighborhood change if people truly lived this way?
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3. Read Matthew 25:31-46.

Leader Insight

Before moving to the next questions, give space for quiet reflection on the passage itself. Encourage participants to notice:

- Jesus deeply identifies with vulnerable people
- The “sheep” were unaware they were serving Jesus
- Compassion is treated as evidence of transformed hearts

Helpful Observation

This passage is less about earning salvation through good works and more about revealing the fruit of a life transformed by Christ.

4. When Jesus says, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for me,” do you think He is speaking metaphorically, or is there a literal, spiritual reality where Jesus actually occupies the space of the suffering? How does your mindset shift if you view a local service

project not as “doing a good deed for a stranger,” but as a direct, physical interaction with Jesus Himself?

Leader Insight

This question invites theological reflection and awe. Avoid forcing one rigid interpretation. The goal is to wrestle with the seriousness of Jesus’ identification with the vulnerable.

Key Themes

- Jesus is spiritually present among the suffering
- Compassion becomes relational, not transactional
- Service becomes sacred encounter

Important Point

People often approach service with:

- Efficiency
- Problem-solving
- Obligation

But if we truly believed Jesus was present, we would likely:

- Slow down
- Listen more carefully
- Treat people with greater tenderness and dignity

Follow-Up Prompt

- How would your body language, tone, or attention change if you believed you were serving Jesus directly?

5. When Jesus commends the “sheep” for feeding and clothing Him, they are genuinely confused and ask, “Lord, when did we see you...?” Why do you think their service was so instinctive that they didn't even realize they were doing something deeply spiritual? How can we move from “performing” good deeds to living a life where service is just a natural reflex?

Leader Insight

The sheep weren’t keeping score. Their compassion had become part of their character.

This question opens discussion about:

- Motivation
- Authenticity
- Spiritual formation

Contrast

Performing service:

- Seeking recognition
- Posting for approval
- Serving occasionally for emotional reward

Reflexive service:

- Flows naturally from love
- Happens quietly
- Becomes a lifestyle

Helpful Application

Natural compassion usually develops through:

- Consistent practice
- Prayer
- Slowing down
- Paying attention to people
- Becoming more like Jesus over time

Follow-Up Prompt

- What habits help keep our hearts soft toward people?

6. “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger...?” What are the biggest cultural distractions that cause us to look right past the people who need us most?

Leader Insight

This is a good opportunity for honest self-awareness without shame.

Possible answers may include:

- Phones and constant stimulation
- Packed schedules
- Individualism
- Political division
- Compassion fatigue
- Anxiety or emotional exhaustion

Key Leadership Point

The issue often isn't lack of compassion—it's lack of attention.

Practical Direction

Ask:

- What practices help us become more aware of people around us?
 - How can we become interruptible again?
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7. If serving the poor is about serving Jesus, then they are actually the ones bringing Jesus to us. How does this flip the power dynamic of charity? How does it teach us humility?

Leader Insight

This question reframes service entirely.

Instead of:

"I am the helper bringing value to someone in need,"

the Gospel says:

"Jesus may be meeting me through this person."

Important Themes

- Mutual dignity
- Humility
- Receiving as well as giving
- Rejecting superiority

Helpful Clarification

Christian service should never reinforce:

- Pride
- Savior complexes
- Condescension

Instead, serving often reveals:

- Our own dependence on grace
- Our shared humanity
- Our need for Jesus

Follow-Up Prompt

- Have you ever gone to help someone and realized you were the one who changed?
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8. If our ultimate goal in The Big Serve is just to improve our city's statistics or feel good about our own righteousness, we miss the point entirely. If the true target of our service is Jesus, how does that change the quality of our attention, our patience, and our love when we are on the ground serving?

Leader Insight

This question addresses motive and posture.

When service becomes primarily outcome-driven:

- People become projects
- Efficiency matters more than presence
- Frustration grows when results are slow

But when serving Jesus becomes the goal:

- Faithfulness matters more than visible success
- Presence becomes important
- Small interactions matter deeply

Practical Examples

Serving Jesus may mean:

- Learning someone's name
- Listening to a story
- Being patient with inconvenience

- Treating every interaction with dignity

Follow-Up Prompt

- What would it look like to be fully present with people during The Big Serve?
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9. How does your motivation change when you realize that partnering with local organizations for The Big Serve isn't about fixing a project, but about honouring a person?

Leader Insight

Projects matter, but people matter more.

This question helps distinguish:

- Accomplishment vs. relationship
- Productivity vs. compassion
- Fixing vs. honouring

Key Leadership Thought

Jesus rarely rushed people. He noticed individuals.

Encourage participants to think about:

- Eye contact
- Conversation
- Empathy
- Respect

Follow-Up Prompt

- Why is it sometimes easier to complete tasks than connect with people emotionally?
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10. Jesus stated that He “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” If the definition of a disciple is someone who becomes like their master, why is it impossible to truly follow Jesus without actively serving others? How has serving in the past shaped your spiritual growth?

Leader Insight

Serving is not an optional add-on to discipleship—it is one of the clearest expressions of becoming like Jesus.

Key Themes

- Jesus modeled sacrificial love
- Service forms humility
- Serving exposes selfishness and grows compassion
- We encounter God through obedience

Encourage Personal Reflection

Invite stories:

- Moments of growth
- Unexpected encounters
- Lessons learned through serving

Gentle Challenge

Discipleship is not only about knowledge or belief—it is about imitation of Christ's character and way of life.

Closing Challenge

This week, intentionally slow down long enough to truly notice one person you would normally overlook. Ask God to help you see them not as an interruption, but as someone carrying His image—and perhaps even as a place where Jesus is hidden in plain sight.