

11

LOOKING FOR THE OVERLOOKED

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will bless and serve those others overlook.

FOCUS VERSES

Mark 10:14

But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

LESSON TEXT

Psalm 146:5-9;
Isaiah 61:1-3; Mark 10:13-16

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God loves to bless those others overlook, especially children.



Series Overview:

This series, "Loving the Unloved," will show the great love Jesus has for all people, whether they are overlooked and deemed unimportant, seen as outcasts in society, or even hated and marginalized by others. Just as Jesus loved those others refused to love, we are called to show and share His love without discrimination. This series helps to highlight the command of Jesus to love your neighbor as yourself.

LESSON CONNECTION I

Teacher Option:
Show Image to help illustrate the Lesson Connection.

Joseph sat on a crude bench within the walls of an ancient Egyptian prison. Deep in thought, he tried to make sense out of his situation. What had gone wrong? Did he take a wrong turn? Why had God let this happen to him?

From his youth Joseph had been a strong believer in God. He had experienced dreams that, he was convinced, were inspired by God. But then, with blow after blow, his life had been reduced to living as a societal outcast in a foreign land.

Joseph's mind flashed back to the traumatic experience of being tackled, tied up, and thrown into a cistern by his own brothers. He would never forget the feeling of helplessness and horror when his own brothers hauled him out of the pit and helped to chain him, like an animal, to the back of a trade caravan.

The years that followed were not much kinder to Joseph. His new boss's promiscuous wife falsely accused him of rape, after he had resisted her unwanted advances. Now he was paying for his good moral behavior while she continued to enjoy a life of wanton luxury.

Finally Joseph's luck seemed to change when God gave him the interpretations of the dreams of two people who were very close to the most powerful man on the planet. Joseph had hoped one of them would mention his situation to someone who could help. But it had been months, and he still had not heard anything.

The loneliness was suffocating. The sense of abandonment chipped away at his self-esteem. It was difficult to resist the temptation to curse God, abandon his faith, or become bitter at his brothers and the people who had him locked away.

Joseph sat on that crude prison bench, overlooked and forgotten. He was a short distance from the throne room of Pharaoh, but people saw no value or potential in the prisoner from Palestine. That is, no one but God. God saw Joseph in a very different light. God saw a young man who was learning to trust. God saw a leader whose character was being developed. God saw the man who would preserve His chosen people.



SG TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: Why do you think some people get overlooked or ignored?

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection on page 355. **I**

- I. CHILDREN ARE OFTEN OVERLOOKED
 - A. The Disciples Were Upset When Parents Brought Their Kids to Jesus
 - » *What does it feel like to be dismissed or ignored?*
 - B. The Children Got in Their Way
 - C. Some See Children as Unimportant
 - D. Jesus Saw Everyone as Important
 - » *Why do we sometimes tend to treat people differently when they appear to be homeless, poor, physically challenged, or face some other life difficulty?*
 - E. I Must Choose to See Others the Way Jesus Sees Them
 - » *Tell about a time when someone saw potential in you or took time to encourage you to pursue God's will for your life.*

- II. GOD LOVES TO BLESS THOSE OTHERS OVERLOOK, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN
 - A. Let the Children Come to Me
 - B. We Must Become Like Little Children
 - » *What are some accusations the enemy might use to convince believers they are unworthy of God's love? How can those accusations be countered?*
 - C. Jesus Placed His Hands on Them and Blessed Them
 - D. Jesus Came to Minister to and Serve People Others Felt Were Unimportant **V**
 - E. I Will Bless and Serve Those Others Overlook
 - » *Who are some overlooked people God is stirring you to reach out to? What has come to mind during this lesson? What can we do to fulfill Jesus' mission?*

Internalizing the Message

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For people who feel ignored or unwanted
- That we would be sensitive to the needs of others around us

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. CHILDREN ARE OFTEN OVERLOOKED

Of all the people in the world who are overlooked, often children are near the top of the list. They are not wage earners or heads of households. They are small in stature and do not often understand or communicate their needs effectively. In this lesson we will discuss the plight of overlooked children, and we will let their predicament be representative of the many other people groups who are easily overlooked.

A. The Disciples Were Upset When Parents Brought Their Kids to Jesus

We have all heard the saying, “Children are to be seen but not heard.” Many of us remember as a child not feeling as important as those who were older than us. Some of us remember sitting at the kid’s table at family dinners or being shooed outside when the adults were ready to talk about important matters. While it can be conceded that certain situations call for “grown-ups” because children may not have yet developed certain abilities or skills, adults should be careful not to inadvertently communicate to children that they are unimportant. Even the disciples of Jesus made this mistake. Mark 10:13 tells us, “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.” When reading the account, our hearts go out to the children who were being shooed away from the presence of Jesus.

What does it feel like to be dismissed or ignored?

B. The Children Got in Their Way

To be honest, as adults, it is easy to relate to the disciples’ feelings. When we have adult projects to do, it can seem like children are obstacles or impediments. They have less experience than adults. Their skills are limited, as is their attention span. And, often, they do not grasp the importance of the matter at hand. It is tempting to just ask them to move out of our way so we can get things done.

The truth is: training and including children in our lives is time consuming and a lot of work. It is inconvenient and requires a great deal of patience. But once children are properly trained and become part of productive society, they will carry their own weight, and then some. The disciples were so focused on their goals that they failed to see the long-term picture. That is an error we all can make.

C. Some See Children as Unimportant

Since adults can mistakenly see children as unimportant, children often internalize that message and consider themselves unimportant. It is like the person standing on the playground waiting to be picked for a team. He nervously watches as the

team captains are down to choosing their last few teammates and trying to avoid choosing the least-skilled athlete for their team. If you have ever been the untalented, last pick, you know the feeling of humiliation.

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But God is not like us. He sees value in people we sometimes cannot see. God is like the professional scout who looks past the fluff and finds the athlete who has both talent and discipline. God is like the antique dealer who scratches through layers of paint and assesses the value or potential of an item based on its structure or the material from which it was made.

Our world seems to overlook people with the best hearts and greatest character. Society seems to be attracted to the noisy, talented, and pushy people. But a good pastor, teacher, or parent will look past talent or personality and see the value of a sincere soul, like God does.

D. Jesus Saw Everyone as Important

Jesus went out of His way to reach those who had been overlooked. He changed His itinerary to visit a well, where He ministered to a Samaritan woman who had been married five times. The result was she later became an effective witness. Jesus risked His reputation by eating with Zacchaeus, the tax collector. Jesus touched and healed unclean lepers and made a special trip to deliver a man so mentally unstable that he lived in a graveyard. Jesus was living out what the psalmist described:

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever: which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners: the LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous: the LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. (Psalm 146:5-9)

Why do we sometimes tend to treat people differently when they appear to be homeless, poor, physically challenged, or face some other life difficulty?

E. I Must Choose to See Others the Way Jesus Sees Them

Our job is to see people through the eyes of Jesus. When Jesus began His ministry, He picked what some scholars believe to be a group of teenage boys from fishing villages to help Him change the world. Therefore, we should not discount the possibility of

Him using the young, uncultured, or inexperienced to do His work. Jesus did not build His ministry by headhunting; He did not go to Jerusalem or Rome in search of talent. He did not scout the great schools or exclusive families of His day to ensure His team would succeed. Rather, He chose good hearts and sincere people, and He trained them to be world changers. Then, as He left this earth, He encouraged His followers to continue in the same manner.

Tell about a time when someone saw potential in you or took time to encourage you to pursue God's will for your life.

II. GOD LOVES TO BLESS THOSE WHOM OTHERS OVERLOOK, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN

A. Let the Children Come to Me

Jesus' compassion was especially evident by the way He treated children. In Mark 10, when Jesus noticed His disciples were turning children away, "He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.' And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:14-16, NKJV).

When Jesus ministered to children, He was planting seeds and giving young souls an opportunity to be a part of His eternal kingdom. We would be wise to minister as Jesus did. He was willing and ready to minister to anyone and everyone. He broke racial barriers, gender barriers, class barriers, and age barriers. He loved everyone.

B. We Must Become Like Little Children

In our story, Jesus warned that if we do not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, we will not get in. Children tend to be more trusting and less opinionated than adults. They are often more willing to jump in and try something new. They seem to be a little more open minded when it comes to believing in the miraculous. Adults learn how to curb many of these attributes. And yes, sometimes caution is in order, but when it comes to our relationship with our heavenly Father, we must risk trusting and hoping.

As we are careful not to overlook others, we should pause to consider that God does not overlook us. God may be calling some of us who are studying this passage today to climb into His arms and let Him love us. Knowing how gracious Jesus was to the outcasts, the overlooked, and to children, we can have confidence He wants to minister to us as well. So in order to make sure we do not hold God at arm's length and forfeit what He has for us, we must deliberately approach Him like a trusting child.

What are some accusations the enemy might use to convince believers they are unworthy of God's love? How can those accusations be countered?

C. Jesus Placed His Hands on Them and Blessed Them

The little children who approached Jesus had the unique privilege of having God incarnate put His hands on them and

impart blessings. What an incredible experience that must have been. Jesus still does this today, only He uses His body—the church—to do so. God blesses people when we allow Him to let faith, healing, and power flow through us to those for whom we pray and on whom we lay our hands.

Churches that operate in Apostolic authority bless those who come to their venues. People who are privileged to grow up in the church learn at a young age to pray, to teach, and to lay hands on the sick. We should all be forever grateful for parents, friends, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, pastors, and Bible school instructors who have put their hands on our heads and prayed for us throughout the years. They were being intentional not to overlook anyone.

D. Jesus Came to Minister to and Serve People Others Felt Were Unimportant

As believers who know Christ and His love on a personal basis, we have the wonderful opportunity to minister to people who feel unimportant and overlooked. We can speak faith into their lives. We can train those who have a heart to minister. We can comfort those who are struggling. We should consider it a privilege and a blessing to minister like Jesus did. But to do so, first we must be sensitive to the plight of those around us.

Teacher Option:

Show Video to help illustrate this information.

E. I Will Bless and Serve Those Others Overlook

Before we conclude, let's take a quick look at Jesus' mission statement. While in the synagogue of His hometown, Jesus read a passage from Isaiah and then declared that it was being fulfilled through Him. Notice how perfectly it summarizes the topic we have been discussing:

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3)

Who are some overlooked people God is stirring you to reach out to? What has come to mind during this lesson? What can we do to fulfill Jesus' mission?

Each of us who will choose to embrace Jesus' mission will experience the abundant life He promised, as He uses us to bless the lives of those who are forgotten and overlooked.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

The senior pastor sat on the platform marveling at the words of faith and wisdom flowing from the mouth of the young man at the pulpit. God's anointing was apparent and powerful. The preacher was articulate and compassionate, and the principles he was skillfully declaring were biblically solid. It was one of those moments when that pastor felt like: there is a God, and everything is right in the universe.

As the young man continued to minister, the pastor's mind flashed back to the day twenty years before when he had first taken the reins at the small country church. The young man who now waxed eloquent was just barely out of toddlerhood at the time. Back in the day, no one expected that child to teach a class or even take out the garbage; they just provided weekly classes and enjoyed watching him play with the other church kids.

About that time, the young preacher stepped down the altar steps in order to emphasize the final point of his sermon. In that moment the pastor appreciated the fact that the sermon being preached was the fruit of a thousand sermons and hundreds of Sunday school and youth classes that had nurtured and developed the young preacher into a man of God. Furthermore, the conscientious care of the church had protected the young man, just as his new wife had been protected fifty miles away in another church that understood the value of children. Now the two church kids were married and leading a youth group of their own.

A few minutes later, as the young man asked for everyone to join him in the altar, people of every age, every race, and every background made their way to the front where they allowed God to minister to and through them to others. No one was overlooked. No one was unimportant. Everyone was valuable. It doesn't get any better than that. The joy and satisfaction of seeing someone you or someone else in the church mentored doing the work of God brings incredible joy and inspires us to love and nurture somebody else. Not everyone will have this exact story, but God will use us to find another child or another overlooked person to inspire to give his or her life to God so He can make that person fruitful in His kingdom.

