



We Will Serve the Lord!

(Please do NOT use the “if time permits” sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private before or after the study.)

(Leaders and participants are encouraged to look up Bible passages for most effective study. Passages are printed below for ease in presentation.)

Identify a recent time when you were privileged to serve another. What did that service look like? Why did you do it? Was it something you felt you *had* to do? Discuss with a partner or your small group.

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should start to begin discussion.

As baptized and redeemed children of God, we take to heart the words of the Psalmist to *serve the Lord with gladness* (Psalm 100:2). As we study God’s Word, we will explore “who,” “why,” and “how” we can serve. As God’s Spirit-filled children, we are empowered to echo the words of Joshua in 24:15b: “*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*” Our lives become lives of Christian service to the Lord.

Opening Prayer: Dear Awesome Creator, We praise You that we are wonderfully made. However, sin spoils Your perfect creation and separates us from You. You solved our sin problem by giving Your Son and our Savior Jesus to serve us by living a perfect life, suffering, and dying for the sins of the world. In His name, we ask forgiveness. Thank You for giving us the Holy Spirit. Thank You for Word and Sacraments through which the Spirit works in our lives to create and sustain our faith, emboldening us to serve those around us with Christ’s love. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we look forward to heaven’s glory, where we will serve our Lord eternally. Yes, You are awesome! In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Whom We Serve

We hear about Joshua, son of Nun, in Numbers 13 and 14. He was an Israelite and was part of their exodus from Egypt. When the Israelites reached the Promised Land of Canaan, Moses selected men to enter and spy out the land that the Lord was giving to them. Ten of the spies reported that the Canaanites were giants and would not easily be defeated. Two of the spies (Caleb and Joshua) believed that with the Lord on their side, they could conquer the land. The children of Israel listened to the ten hopeless spies, did not trust in the Lord, and were sent into exile and more wilderness wandering for a total of 40 years. Only Joshua and Caleb were subsequently allowed to live and enter the Promised Land. (See **Numbers 13:17–24; 32–33 and 14:6–10a, 26–30.**) **It is suggested to read about Joshua and review his story; pay particular attention to the Bible verses noted in these first three sections.**

Numbers 13:17-24: ¹⁷ Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, “Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country, ¹⁸ and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, ¹⁹ and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, ²⁰ and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.” Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.²¹ So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath. ²² They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) ²³ And they came to the Valley of Eshcol and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them; they also brought some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴ That place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster that the people of Israel cut down from there.

Numbers 13:32-33: ³² So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. ³³ And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

Numbers 14:6-10a: ⁶ And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes ⁷ and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. ⁸ If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. ⁹ Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they

are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.”

¹⁰ Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones.

Numbers 14:26-30: ²⁶ And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ²⁷ “How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. ²⁸ Say to them, ‘As I live, declares the Lord, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ²⁹ your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, ³⁰ not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

What do we learn about Joshua in Exodus 24:13? In Joshua 1:1–9? **We learn that Joshua was the assistant to Moses and was commissioned by the Lord to take over leadership of God’s people after Moses’ death.**

Exodus 24:13: ¹³ So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God.

Joshua 1:1-9: ¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, ² “Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. ⁵ No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

At the end of Joshua’s life after he had observed first-hand how the Lord had conquered and led the children of Israel into the Promised Land, he makes the Spirit-empowered statement of belief found in

Joshua 24:14–15: But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Joshua 24:14-15: ¹⁴ “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Describe the Lord that Joshua had come to know over his lifetime. **Use the previous Bible verses for this description. Answers will vary, but could include God’s faithfulness to Joshua by loving him, by keeping His promises, by giving him faith, by sustaining him through the 40 years of wandering, and by conquering the Canaanites and giving His children the Promised Land. The Lord was truly Lord of lords, almighty, and awesome.** Was He worthy of Joshua’s trust and service? **Yes.** Why or why not? **Answers will vary, but could include discussion about God being the ONLY God worthy of Joshua’s trust and service.**

In the Apostles’ Creed, we confess that we believe in the only true God, the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In **Deuteronomy 10:17^a**, Moses reminded the children of Israel that:

... the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God ...
Deuteronomy 10:17^a: ¹⁷ For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, ...

If time permits: As a group, make a list of the characteristics of the true God. See the following passages for suggestions: **Genesis 17:1 almighty, all-powerful (omnipotent), Exodus 34:6–7 merciful and gracious, steadfast love, faithful, forgiving, Deuteronomy 32:4 perfect, just, faithful, without iniquity, upright; Psalm 90:12 everlasting, eternal, Psalm 118:1 good, loving, Psalm 139:14 all-knowing (omniscient), Isaiah 6:3 holy, Jeremiah 3:12 merciful, Jeremiah 23:24 present everywhere (omnipresent), Malachi 3:6 unchangeable, John 4:24 spirit, 2 Timothy 2:13 faithful, keeps His promises, and 1 John 4:8 love.** Can you think of more? **Answers will vary.**

Faith Talk: Share with a partner or the small group a description of *your* awesome God. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Faith Talk: Read **Hebrews 13:8**. In the fourth verse of the hymn “Abide with Me” (*LSB* #878), we sing: “Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me.” Why is it important that God, our Lord, never changes? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**
Hebrews 13:8: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Why We Serve

We serve the awesome, the great, and the mighty Triune God. Why? Through God’s Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, the Holy Spirit works and sustains faith in us along with the knowledge of what our God has done for us. Because of the saving work of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and we are blessed to be a blessing to others.

Read **Luke 1:68–75**. As baptized children of God, how does this prophecy from John the Baptist’s father answer the question of “why” we serve? **Through Christ, He has redeemed His people and given us salvation; He fulfilled His promises to us; He has delivered us from our enemies — the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh; He has shown mercy to us; our response is to serve Him.** According to Zechariah (verses 74–75), how is this service characterized? **Without fear in holiness and righteousness.**
Luke 1:68-75: ⁶⁸ “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹ that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷² to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

In **Matthew 4:10; 20:26–28**; and **John 12:26**, Jesus commands us to serve and describes that service. Identify the command and the description. **The command is to serve the Lord; Jesus describes this service as following Him — by example He came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many; we serve in His name.** How does the Father look at service done in Jesus’ name? **With honor.**
Matthew 4:10: Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”
Matthew 20:26-28: ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
John 12:26: ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Just before Jesus miraculously fed the four thousand, Mark 8:2 records these words of Jesus: “*I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.*” As faith-filled people of God, we are motivated by the Spirit to follow Jesus’ example — to take action and serve others who are in need. How does **James 2:14–17** illustrate this? **We don’t just tell those in need that things will get better – we actually take action, serving them by giving them the physical things they need. Our actions result from our faith.**
James 2:14-17: ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

In **Joshua 22:5**, we hear once again from Joshua about service. According to this verse, what accompanies our service to the Lord? **Observe the things the Lord has commanded, love the Lord, walk in His ways, cling to Him.** How do we serve Him? **With all our heart and soul.**
Joshua 22:5: ⁵ Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.
Faith Talk: Jesus says in John 12:26 that to serve Him, we must follow Him. How would you describe following Jesus? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

How We Serve

Romans 12:9–13 lists the marks of a Christian. Notice that the phrase *serve the Lord* is included in the list. What other actions and attitudes accompany service to the Lord? **Love is genuine; abhor evil and cling to the good; love with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor; be zealous and fervent in spirit; rejoice in hope; be patient in tribulation; be constant in prayer; contribute to the needs of others; and show hospitality.**

Romans 12:9-13: ⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

In 1 Peter 4:10, we read: *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.* **1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 27–28** reminds us to use our God-given gifts to serve in the family of God. What spiritual gifts and activities are listed that enable us to serve? **Empowered by the Spirit of God for the common good, Christians are given spiritual gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working miracles, prophecy, discernment between spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of those tongues. Activities include teaching, healing, helping, and administrating.**

1 Corinthians 12:4-11: ⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. **1 Corinthians 12:27-28:** ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

Faith Talk: Simon's mother-in-law was healed by Jesus from a fever in **Mark 1:30–31**. In verse 31, how quickly does she begin to serve Jesus? **After she was healed — right away.** Is service always convenient? Why or why not? What kinds of sinful things might hinder our service to the Lord? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Mark 1:30-31: ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. ³¹ And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

According to **1 Thessalonians 1:6–10**, what can our service to the living and true God accomplish, by the grace of God? **A witness to others of our belief in the Good News about Jesus – His love, our response.** **1 Thessalonians 1:6-10:** ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸ For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. ⁹ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Faith Talk: Have you been on the receiving side of somebody's service to you? Is it easier to serve or to be served? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Picture **Revelation 7:13–17**. What is our sainted life like in the glories of heaven? **Redeemed and righteous through the blood of the Lamb, before the throne of God, serve Him day and night, bask in God's presence, no hunger or thirst, no tears, no scorching heat, drink from springs of living water.** How do you picture we will serve our Lord *day and night in his temple*? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Revelation 7:13-17: ¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb in

the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Faith Walk:

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit embolden you, help you identify areas of needed service, and give you opportunities to *serve the Lord with gladness*. Be prepared to serve!
2. As you serve, witness to the Good News about Jesus.
3. Do additional study about Joshua and all that the Lord accomplished in His life.
4. Praise the Lord for the Spirit-given gifts He has given to you and ask that all service you do be done to His glory.

Closing Prayer: Speak or sing the words of “Take My Life and Let It Be” (*LSB* #783; *LW* #404; *TLH* #400).

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