



## SESSION 5

# LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY

### ***The Point***

Loving Jesus means personally helping those in need.

### ***The Passage***

Matthew 25:34-40

### ***The Bible Meets Life***

Serving people who can benefit us is not difficult. “Scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours” is a reality in the business world and even in many relationships. Serving, then, becomes about me, and not about the other person. That mindset is absent in Scripture and is to be absent in the church; in fact, believers are called to serve even those who have no means to repay a kindness.

### ***The Setting***

Jesus had been teaching His disciples about signs related to His second coming (Matthew 24:3-51). He then told two parables to encourage them to prepare for that day. The first was the parable of the 10 virgins (25:1-13); the second was the parable of the talents (vv. 14-30). Jesus also described a day when He would return in glory and reward His children for their attention to helping people in need (vv. 31-40).

## What does the Bible say?

### **Matthew 25:34-40 (CSB)**

**<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**

**<sup>35</sup> “‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in;**

**<sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited me.’**

**<sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?**

**<sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or without clothes and clothe you?**

**<sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?’**

**<sup>40</sup> “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”**

# GET INTO THE STUDY



10 minutes

Notes



**DISCUSS:** Invite your group members to discuss **Question #1** on page 113 of the PSG (Personal Study Guide): **“What do you like best about your community?”** Allow time for each person to respond.

**SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGE 114):** Has your town made the list? A variety of real estate, business, and travel websites keep updated lists of the best cities to live in, the best neighborhoods for bringing up children, the best business-friendly

cities, and on and on. One word that might be used to describe the foundation of these lists is “treatment.” How do we treat tourists and other visitors to our area? How well do local governments and groups treat businesses in the area? We can identify a community by how it treats others.

**SAY:** “In a similar way, you reveal your true identity in the way you treat others. That’s because how we as Christians treat others—how we love and respond to their needs—is directly connected to our love for God and our relationship with Him.”

**GUIDE:** Call attention to **The Point** on page 114 of the PSG: **“Loving Jesus means personally helping those in need.”**

**PRAY:** Transition into the discussion with prayer. Pray for God to show you opportunities to live out your identity in Christ by serving others in your church and community.

**TIP:** We each process information at different speeds. To allow thoughtful group members time for this, ask if anyone has comments on any part of the lesson before you close.



Display Pack Item #12 to use with your discussion of Matthew 25:34-36 on page 146.

**PLAYLIST PICK:**  
“Jesus”  
By Chris Tomlin



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## Matthew 25:34-36 Commentary

**We are surrounded by opportunities to meet basic human needs. Verse 34:** In this passage, Jesus described a day when He would come to reign as King and sit on His glorious throne (Matthew 25:31). He would gather the nations before Him and separate them one from another as a shepherd separates sheep from goats (vv. 32-33). In this week's session passage, Jesus highlighted the eternal reward His children would receive.

From verses 31 and 34 we know the King is the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. During His earthly ministry, Jesus regularly used the term "Son of Man" to describe Himself (Matthew 16:28; Mark 10:45). In Revelation 19:16, however, the apostle John described Jesus at His second coming, calling Him "King of kings and Lord of lords." All the nations would see His glory and splendor (Revelation 1:7). The prophet Isaiah also described Jesus ("stump of Jesse") as ruling the nations one day (Isaiah 11:1-10).

Verse 33 mentions Jesus' placing the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Verse 34 then describes the words Jesus would say to "those on his right." In biblical times, the right hand was the position of favor. Even today, we use the expression "right-hand man" to describe someone important to us.

The word "come" is a command, but also a special exhortation or invitation. It is the word Jesus used to invite the disciples to come "follow" Him (Mark 1:17) and for the disciples to come and eat (John 21:12). The King described His sheep as "you who are blessed by my Father." To have the Father's blessing meant one had the Son's blessing as well; Jesus often spoke of His oneness with the Father, both in nature and in purpose (John 5:17; 10:30). In fact, the oneness of purpose in the persons of the Trinity may be seen clearly in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. The Father planned our salvation (Ephesians 1:3-6), the Son provided it by His death (v. 7), and the Holy Spirit applies it to our lives (vv. 13-14). The word translated "inherit" signifies the sheep were heirs to the great blessing they were about to receive. Typically an inheritance went to someone in the family, so the term also suggests a close relationship. The word "kingdom" normally denotes God's rule or reign. During Jesus' earthly ministry, He often spoke of God's kingdom having come (Matthew 4:17; Luke 17:20-21). Here, the term describes the place where God's rule is brought to its ultimate fulfillment.

This glorious kingdom was prepared for God's children "from the foundation of the world." Scripture often describes God's blessings of salvation as something He prepared for us before the world began (Ephesians 1:4-5). God's children were in His mind from the beginning of creation. This truth is intended to bring us assurance; God will stop at nothing to see His salvation come to pass for His children. Jesus assured His followers that one day He, the coming King, would say these precious words to them.



## Matthew 25:34-36 Commentary (Continued)

**Verse 35:** Verses 35-36 describe various contexts in which the children of God served Jesus. First, Jesus said, “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.” Jesus affirmed them for providing food to meet a basic need. They shared what they had with Him, thus putting His need ahead of their own. Second, Jesus said, “I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.” In Bible times, as today, water was a precious resource. People did not enjoy running water in their homes; rather, they counted on springs, wells, or cisterns for water. From mid-April to at least September, no significant rain falls in Israel; consequently, water can become very scarce in late summer and early autumn. Jesus commended His followers for sharing water with Him when He thirsted.

Third, Jesus said, “I was a stranger and you took me in.” In the ancient world, hospitality was an important virtue and a natural expression of brotherly love (Hebrews 13:1-2; 1 Peter 4:8-9). People counted on the hospitality of family members, friends, or even strangers to care for them and provide for their basic needs as they traveled (Genesis 24:31-32; Luke 19:5-6). Hotels or motels were not common. Furthermore, some people might host fellow Israelites, but some might feel hesitant to host strangers, especially foreigners. Israelites might also feel hesitant to stay in a stranger’s home (Judges 19:11-12). During His time on earth, Jesus once said, “The Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). He commended those who showed gracious hospitality.

**Verse 36:** Jesus continued His commendation to His children with the words “I was naked and you clothed me.” “Naked” can mean without clothes, as we often understand this verse, but it also can mean the person was poorly dressed (James 2:15, “without clothes”) or lacked an outer garment (John 21:7, “had taken it [outer garment] off”). Such a person would not normally appear in public this way, and would suffer from the cold in winter.

Jesus’ words “I was sick and you took care of me” described yet another basic human need His people had met. People beset with various illnesses or diseases often have difficulty caring for themselves. Caring for sick people and attending to their needs—including the need for companionship—can provide encouragement to them during this time of difficulty.

Finally, Jesus mentioned one more need: “I was in prison and you visited me.” Imprisoned people were cut off from earning a living and often faced difficult if not miserable conditions in prison. During the apostle Paul’s imprisonment, he drew great comfort from those who visited him (2 Timothy 1:16-17; 4:11). He asked those to whom he wrote to remember to pray for him (Colossians 4:3-4,18).





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## Matthew 25:37-40 Commentary

**Serving others is serving Jesus. Verse 37:** The term “righteous” describes a positive quality of life. God calls Christians to display the righteousness of Christ (Romans 6:13). The righteous had displayed their inner character with external deeds of ministry. Nonetheless, they were somewhat bewildered. Their question “when did we see you hungry and feed you?” indicated their lack of understanding. As far as they knew, Jesus had never presented Himself to them with a need for food. Nor could they recall having seen Jesus thirsty and given Him something to drink. It seemed that Jesus was commending them for kindnesses they could not recall doing.

**Verses 38-39:** Those at Jesus’ right hand continued their questions: “when did we see you a stranger and take you in?” They practiced hospitality, but they certainly could not remember hosting Jesus. They also could not recall having seen Jesus without clothes (same word as in v. 36) and taken the time to clothe Him. Again, it does not necessarily describe nakedness as we understand it, but perhaps denotes someone in serious need of better or warmer clothes (James 2:15). They also asked, “when did we see you sick?” They did not know of a time they had ministered to Him in this manner, much less in prison.

**Verse 40:** Jesus said He, the King, would then answer His puzzled children. The words “truly I tell you” include the Greek word “amen.” The word comes from Hebrew and means “to confirm or support.” Many translations render it “verily” (KJV). Jesus’ assurance leaves no doubt as to the truth of what He communicated to His disciples.

Jesus assured His followers: “whatever you did” He had seen and blessed. Their service was not spectacular nor performed on behalf of someone great. Rather, Jesus described those they served as “one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine.” “Least of these” or similar expressions often characterize believers (Matthew 10:42; 18:6,10,14). Some interpreters believe the term might describe hurting or downtrodden people lacking in basic human needs. The righteous had served them without regard to their status or to any reward they might receive.

Jesus’ words “you did for me” again would have surprised His hearers. They had merely seen people in need and taken steps to meet those needs. They ministered freely out of what they had, sharing those resources—meager or plentiful—with others less fortunate than they were. As they did, they ministered to their Lord, who saw everything they did. He noticed when no one else did, and one day, He will provide them their reward—their eternal reward. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus urged people to serve God without thought of reward, for God saw everything and would reward them at the appropriate time (6:2-4).



5 minutes

# LIVE IT OUT

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

**SAY:** "How will you put this passage into practice this week?"

**GUIDE:** Lead group members to consider the responses to the Bible study listed on page 120 of the PSG.



- » **Start small.** You'll see someone who needs help this week. Step in and help, without making a judgment call about whether or not he or she deserves help.
- » **Work together.** As a group, identify a need in your group or church and create a strategy for helping that person or family through whatever hardship they are facing.
- » **Get involved.** Look into the ways your church ministers to those in need in your community. How can you actively help those in need in an ongoing way?

## Wrap It Up

**SAY:** "The identity of a Christ-follower is wrapped up in Jesus. Who you are in Christ is seen in how you relate to other people. **When you serve others, you are serving Him.**"

**GROUPS  
MATTER.**

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