



A small group study that equips you to love  
the vulnerable in your city.

2:10 PROGRAM  
A MINISTRY OF



Reconciled  
World



### Lesson 1

Sent to Respond

### Lesson 2

Sent to the Vulnerable

### Lesson 3

Sent for Loving Acts

### Lesson 4

Sent for Building Relationships

### Lesson 5

Sent for Obedience

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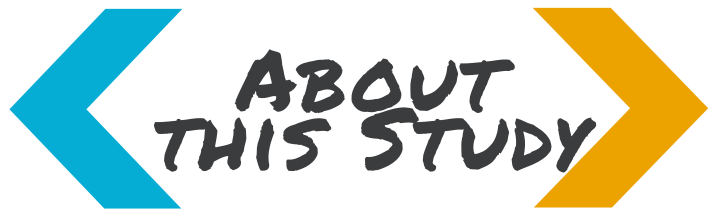
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## Goal

This study is meant to be an introductory tool used to equip you and your group for outreach towards the vulnerable in your local city. We believe, as an organization, that folded into the command of being sent is a clear recognizable challenge to see the needs of the vulnerable and act with truth, love and compassion—not only for the building of the kingdom of God but also for the growth of the body of Christ. Therefore, it is our passion to equip you with a biblical response to loving the vulnerable in your local context, while guiding you with tangible action steps. This study provides opportunities for engaging discussion, sound biblical study and tangible action steps that will equip you for being sent out to love others.

## Format

The study is broken into five separate lessons. Each lesson should provide sufficient discussion and content to cover one hour of study. Homework is given at the end of each lesson, so it is recommended that the group leave at least a few days between each lesson.

Each lesson is broken into four different sections.

- 1) Discover: An introduction to the lesson theme
- 2) Discussion questions
- 3) Depend
- 4) Disperse

Discover: To begin each lesson read the introduction aloud as a group. The story or topic presented should provide the group with a starting point for the theme being discussed.

Discussion: The questions are written to elicit conversation over the lesson theme. Some questions may provoke deeper discussion, some not so much. Either way use the questions to flow through the lesson and study the theme presented. For some questions a pencil, paper and a Bible will be needed.

Depend: Prayer is an essential part of being sent. At every step of the way we need to remember our dependence on God. Near the end of each lesson is a “Depend” section. In this section you will find a specific topic to pray about. The leader or group as a whole is encouraged to depend on God for few minutes through prayer.

Disperse: In this section you will find a specific take-away for the week to come. Often you will be asked to think, pray or list a few items in preparation for the following lesson. The elements provided in this section are meant to further ground the group in the themes being presented. As a group it is recommended to take the “Disperse” section seriously and to come to the next lesson prepared to share your thoughts.

Feel free to use this study as you see fit. If you find throughout the study that you would like to add an “icebreaker” type activity, group outreach activity or even more discussion questions, feel free to do so.



**GOD WANTS TO USE HIS CHURCH AS A CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH HE RELEASES HIS  
TRANSFORMING POWER TO HEAL BROKENNESS.  
- BOB MOFFITT**



# SENT STUDY INTRODUCTION

There they sat in the upper room, confused, fearful and bewildered—only hours removed from Jesus' death on the cross. What were the disciples to do now? They were now the hunted ones, and the storybook ending they had hoped for seemed to have crumbled. Jesus was gone, and there they gathered... forlorn... attempting to configure a game plan to move forward.

Out of nowhere Jesus appears and gives them a hearty greeting, "Peace be with you!" Imagine the surprise and shock on their faces!! After Jesus shows them His hands and side, their fear is turned into joy, and the tattered group of followers is given the commissioning that will forever change the trajectory of history.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

With a lungful of air, Jesus breathes the power of the Holy Spirit upon them and the mission begins.

While the nation of Israel had primarily acted as a magnet drawing others to God, now the process had changed. The followers of Jesus were to spread out and reflect the love of the Father to every nation, tribe and tongue. Jesus's character and life would now bear witness through them and all who proclaim His name thereafter.

We often think of being "sent" as being commissioned to share the gospel of Jesus through the words we say and the prayers we pray. That it means changing passports or crossing cultural barriers. But what if words and prayers were only a part of that sending decree? What if being sent included actions and attitudes, ethics and service? What if it meant that words alone would be hollow if a life of genuine love did not accompany them? (1 Cor. 13:1) What if being sent also meant living as Christ lived, dying for self and embracing a love for others?

The life of Jesus is certainly characterized by life changing words and statements. The Red-letter phrases have forever changed the course of history, but so did His compassionate actions and loving-kindness. It was His empathy, distress and care for those on the fringes that demonstrated and magnified the intensity of the red-letter phrases. Jesus's whole life teaches us the beauty and privilege of being called people sent in His name.

As we will explore in this study, a life on pursuit of Jesus is a life filled with love for others. We hope this reality is clearly conveyed as you discuss and pray your way through this material. We hope that this study for you is refreshing, challenging, encouraging and equipping. Now GO!!! Study, love and live for the glory of God in your city! You have been sent... what are you waiting for!

# LESSON 1 SENT TO RESPOND



For generations the Christian message to the world has been one characterized by generosity, compassion and sacrifice. Many Christ followers (William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Theresa) have stood firm in the face of opposition and confronted situations of injustice and discrimination. By holding steady to the gospel message of love, justice and grace, Christians across the world have reflected the hope of Jesus to the lost, broken and marginalized.

As we continue to move deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is paramount that Christians continue to emulate the message of Jesus and not that of the culture around us. The Bible teaches in John 13:35 that “they will know we are His disciples, if we love one another.”

The Barna Group conducted a study<sup>[1]</sup> that measured and compared the lifestyles of both Christians and non-Christians living in the United States. The results showed that both groups tend to live a lifestyle of both sacrifice and self-indulgence. While there were some differences in conduct, the overarching outcome proved little variance in behavior between the two groups. In the area of moral behavior (profanity, pornography, gambling and slandering) the groups measured virtually the same. In the area of caring for the poor and vulnerable the differences were also minimal.

*“Although born-again Christians are more likely to volunteer for their church, they are no more likely than average to help the poor or homeless, the survey found.”*

In particular the younger age group (18–22) showed lower than average levels of volunteerism to churches and other non-profits and to helping the poor. The study determined that although people (Christians and non-Christians alike) think of themselves as engaged in assisting needy people, the vast majority of Americans merely dabble in helping others.



David Kinnaman, director of the study, concluded this about Christians: *“The respect, patience, self-control and kindness of born-again Christians should astound people, but the lifestyles and relationships of born-again believers are not much different than others.”*

## DISCUSSION

Take a moment and discuss your thoughts in relation to the Barna study shared above.

### The Character of God

Read Psalms 146:7-9 and Deuteronomy 10:17-19

**What can we understand about God's character by reading these two verses?**

There are over 400 verses in the Bible that reflect God's heart for the poor, vulnerable and needy. There are also numerous verses that outline the type of response Christ followers are to have towards these people.

Read Deuteronomy 15:7-8, Isaiah 1:17 and Luke 14:12-14

**What is the response that God commands of the followers he has sent?**

**How do the response that God expects and the way that Christians behave today differ?**

Read Ezekiel 16:49

**What were the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah?**

To love God with all your heart, soul and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself are the two greatest commandments (Matthew 22:36-40).

**How do you see loving the poor and vulnerable as part of these commandments?**

Finish by reading Matthew 25:34-40.

**How would you sum up your feelings about this passage?**

Read and discuss the following Poem:

**The Shelter Poem**

*I was hungry, and you formed a humanities group to discuss my hunger.  
I was imprisoned, and you crept off quietly to your chapel and prayed for my release.  
I was naked, and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance.  
I was sick, and you knelt and thanked God for your health.  
I was homeless, and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God.  
I was lonely, and you left me alone to pray for me.  
You seem so holy and so close to God.  
But I am still very hungry – and lonely – and cold. <sup>[2]</sup>*

**In what ways does this poem reflect the reality of today? How can we be people who respond differently?**

## DEPEND

As sent people we will encounter many needs around us; some very tangible and obvious, others hidden by emotional walls. Take a moment to pray for the vulnerable of your community. Ask God what His heart is for them. Ask God to open your eyes to see them as He sees them and to give you His heart for them. Pray that they will encounter people who will reflect the love of Jesus to them and care for them in physical and spiritual ways. Also, ask God to begin stirring your heart in a way that leads you to compassion and action.

## DISPERSE

Over the next week begin to think about who the vulnerable in your community are. Take a few minutes to write down and create a list of these people groups. Come to the next lesson prepared to share your list with the group.

Over the course of this study you will be challenged to think about many things. As you think, do not forget to also apply. Finding ways to love others can sometimes be overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. Everyday each of us interacts with lots of people—some through short greetings and others in more in-depth conversations. Begin asking God to make you more aware of what it means to love others, and then seek to live that out. Don't be afraid to talk to people and share with others through joy, generosity and kindness.

# LESSON 2

## SENT TO THE VULNERABLE



### Mary's Story

Naw Lay, from the Karen ethnic group in Burma, was born in a refugee camp in Thailand and lived there until she moved to the United States at age 29. Lutheran Social Services resettled her to Phoenix, Arizona along with her husband and four-year-old daughter. A Christian, Naw Lay often can be found singing while walking down the street or cleaning her home. She never hesitates to verbally express her gratitude to the Lord for the many blessings in her life. She has a vibrant, often sarcastic sense of humor, and her many facial expressions show clearly what she is thinking.

Perhaps as a result of her courteous culture, growing up in an environment of dependency, or a personal desire to avoid conflict, Naw Lay often backs down from situations that pit her against those in authority, like a landlord. This posture, combined with few alternative options for housing (due to poverty) and a limited understanding of English and local laws, often leaves refugees vulnerable to exploitation and injustice.

As with almost all refugees resettled to the United States, Naw Lay didn't have a choice about where her family would live in Phoenix. The resettlement agencies, limited in their financial resources, place these families in apartment complexes with low monthly fees, often accompanied by indifferent apartment managers. While Naw Lay's apartment complex was quieter and safer than many where refugees are placed, the unrelenting Phoenix summer heat rendered the old air-conditioning system almost useless. Warm air would blast out through the vents in Naw Lay's apartment all day and night, barely providing relief from the 115-degree heat outside.





Naw Lay was five months pregnant in the height of summer and, with limited English, she filed multiple work orders with the apartment manager to fix the broken air-conditioning system. Every time, a repairperson would make a small adjustment and mark the work order as completed, but the apartment remained sweltering—unbearable even for a woman who grew up in the temperate forests of Thailand. After several attempts, Naw Lay began sleeping on the kitchen floor to glean what relief she could from the laminate tile. She and her family even spent several days at a friend's home while continuing to pay full rent at their uninhabitable apartment.

She shared this concern with her friend Mary, whose church small group had been walking with the family since they arrived at the airport. Mary called the apartment manager, explained her knowledge of the situation, and insisted the apartment be made livable. She became the "squeaky wheel" that would not back down. After having trouble contacting the manager, Mary went to the leasing office and sat there until the manager was available. The manager blamed the problem on the repairman, so Mary spoke with the repairman who in turn blamed the manager. Mary demanded the necessary repairs be made and called the manager day after day until her friend was satisfied with the temperature in her home.

IT IS STRIKING TO SEE HOW OFTEN GOD IS INTRODUCED AS THE DEFENDER OF THE VULNERABLE. THE GOD OF CREATION AND ETERNITY CHOOSES TO BE KNOWN AS THE "FATHER TO THE FATHERLESS", AND "DEFENDER OF WIDOWS."  
- TIM KELLER *GENEROUS JUSTICE*

## DISCUSSION

Over the past week you have identified and created a list of the vulnerable people in your community. Share your findings with the group. Together form a group list.

Take a moment to consider the definition of the word vulnerable:

*Vulnerable: easily hurt or harmed physically, mentally, or emotionally. Open to attack, harm, or damage* <sup>(3)</sup>

**When hearing this definition what thoughts or images come to mind?**

Look up the following verses and record who are the vulnerable that God identifies in each of these verses and how should we respond:

Verse	What categories of poor are mentioned?	How should we respond?
Isaiah 58:6-11		
Isaiah 1:17		
Jeremiah 22:3		
Proverbs 31:8-9		
James 2:15-17		
Job 29:12-17		

Are the vulnerable in these verses similar or different to the ones on your list?

Often you see the vulnerable as focused on the orphans, widows, fatherless and aliens. Why do you think that these were singled out?

## God's Heart for the Vulnerable

Why do you think the vulnerable are so important to God?

How does God describe His relationship to the vulnerable in each of these verses?

Deuteronomy 10:17-19 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 146:7-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 68:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 10:14-18 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 72: 12-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 4:16-21 \_\_\_\_\_

Overall how would you describe God's reaction to the vulnerable?

How did you see that reflected in the life of Jesus?

Read Galatians 2:9-10

What was the one thing that the apostles asked of Paul?

For generations Christians have been active leaders in caring for the poor, oppressed and vulnerable. Theologian John Stott states:

*Early Christians founded schools, hospitals and refuges for the outcast. Later they abolished the slave trade and freed slaves, and they improved the conditions of workers in the mills and mines and of prisoners in gaols. They protected children from commercial exploitation in the factories of the West and from ritual prostitution in the temples of the East. Today they care for the blind and the deaf, the orphaned and the widowed, the sick and the dying. They get alongside junkies and stay alongside them during the traumatic period of withdrawal. They set themselves against racism and political oppression and stand up for the oppressed and the disadvantaged in the slums and ghettos. Why have they done it? Because people matter. <sup>(4)</sup>*

Every man, woman and child has intrinsic value and deserves to be treated with mercy, compassion and justice.

**Knowing you have been sent to the vulnerable, how does this quote encourage you?**

## DEPEND

Take a moment to pray for a few of the organizations or agencies that care for the vulnerable in your city. Maybe you know some of them by name or have been a part of their work in the past. Pray that God would encourage them and provide for them, and that the vulnerable would be blessed and loved through their ministry. Also, pray for God to show you what He is doing and where He is already working around your city.

## DISPERSE

When asked by John the Baptist if he was the "one to come" Jesus replied in Matthew 11:4-6, "Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

Over the next few days before meeting again be keenly aware of any stories, articles or personal experiences that you encounter that talk about the poor and vulnerable in your community. The stories are all around us. Take note of what you "hear" and "see" and be prepared to share any stories or experiences with the group when you convene again.

# LESSON 3 SENT FOR LOVING ACTS



## *John's Story*

It is amazing how a simple Google search can bless your neighbor.

A few months after moving into our new home we met Carol. She was a recent widow that lived across the street and struggled with health problems. With a family that did not help care for her needs, Carol was very vulnerable and lonely. We mowed her grass, pruned her trees and enjoyed getting to know her.

One afternoon I looked out my window and noticed that Carol had a garage problem. Her car was somehow crookedly parked half way into the garage and her garage door was bashed in and twisted. It didn't take much observation to realize that something wasn't right.

I walked across the street to find that Carol had accidentally driven her car through the garage door leaving a trail of bent metal, glass and debris. Carol shared with me that she had gotten her slipper caught on the accelerator and wasn't able to react quickly enough to stop the car as she pulled into the driveway. Luckily, she had made it through the episode unharmed... just quite embarrassed.

She shared with me that a garage door mechanic was coming later that day to give her an estimate for repairs. I told her I would keep an eye out for his vehicle and come over when he showed up.

Back home I decided to do a little research. How much is a garage door repair I thought?? I consulted Google and within 8 minutes I had printed off an estimation sheet with a ballpark figure for a replacement in our area.



A few hours later Carol and I stood talking with the garage door technician about the details of replacement. After asking how much the replacement would cost, the technician shared a cost and Carol immediately looked at me. Carol was looking to me for assurance that the cost was fair and honest. In that moment I felt as if I was being the neighbor that God wanted me to be. Carol needed a trustworthy opinion and someone to assure her that she wasn't being taken advantage of.

Loving our neighbor will come in so many shapes and sizes. I wasn't a garage door expert, but I was capable of doing a simple Google search. Sometimes our tendency is to feel we have to do big things in order to bless and love other people. But in reality sometimes it is the little acts that speak the loudest. I hope that Carol got a small glimpse of God's kingdom that day. A glimpse that says, "You matter and I care because God cares."



"YOU DON'T GIVE THE PEOPLE DIGNITY,  
YOU AFFIRM IT"  
- JOHN PERKINS

## DISCUSSION

Last week you were asked to take notice of any stories relating to the poor and vulnerable in your city. What did you see and hear over the past week?

We see numerous places in the Bible where Jesus heals a person with words alone (Mark 1:25, Mark 2:11, Matt 8:13). In Matthew 8:1-4, Jesus heals a man with leprosy. During this healing however, the Bible specifically indicates that Jesus chose to heal the man by reaching out and touching him.

**If His words alone could heal the leprosy man, why might Jesus have chosen to also touch him?**

**Why could the touch from Jesus be considered a loving thing to do?**

Many times it is described that people living in poverty lack a sense of self-dignity. For example in the book When Helping Hurts the authors state:

*“While poor people mention having a lack of material things, they tend to describe their condition in far more psychological and social terms. Poor people typically talk in terms of shame, inferiority, powerlessness, humiliation, fear, hopelessness, depression, social isolation and voicelessness.” (page 53) [5]*



**Why do you feel like most people living in poverty would feel a sense of shame, hopelessness, or fear?**

**Do you think that affirming dignity and worth is a primary focus of most outreach given to the poor today? Why or why not?**

Think about some of the vulnerable people that you have identified through this study.

**How might some of those individuals be struggling with feelings of powerlessness, shame, fear or hopelessness?**

**BEAUTY IS NOT IN THE MAGNITUDE OF THE MISSION  
BUT IN THE PRIORITY IT TAKES IN OUR LIVES.  
- BRANDON HATMAKER**

## Loving Acts

Loving acts are small demonstrable actions that express to others the love and hope of Jesus Christ. They seek not only to help meet a person's physical needs, but to build relationship that speaks to their social, emotional and spiritual needs as well. Loving acts build up and encourage the poor to see hope and potential in themselves and their future. They should encourage the vulnerable by showing them that they are valuable, important and worthy of our time and friendship. Loving acts identify the deeper needs of a person and build relationship with the vulnerable that re-affirms their dignity and provides friendship in times of fear, depression and difficulty.

**How is something as simple as helping the vulnerable widow in the story shared earlier a loving act?**

The world tends to choose big over small, fast over slow and strong over weak. The world says bigger is better, but that is not always the method that God tends to use. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

**How does this verse encourage you in realizing that the loving acts you are sent to do don't need to be big, grand events or projects? They can be simple, small, unrecognized actions of love.**

**Take a moment and make a list. What are some examples of loving acts towards the vulnerable that you can think of?**

## DEPEND

Take a moment to pray for some of the people or situations that you heard and saw over the past week. Pray for the people and families involved, and that God's love would be demonstrated to those in need.

## DISPERSE

Over the next week take a few minutes and make a list of the most important attributes in a loving act. Consider what makes an act loving? Come prepared next time to share your thoughts.

# LESSON 4 SENT TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS



## Todd's Story

He walked by homeless beggars on his way to work in downtown Cincinnati for many years and always felt a nudging to help, but never really knew how. For years Todd had been a faithful volunteer at the church and had been involved with various outreach events but had never really fully been trained or equipped to handle what he would begin that Thanksgiving day.



Todd met Danny at Thanksgiving 2006, when he was seated at the same table for the church Thanksgiving outreach event. They talked for a few minutes and soon found that they had a few similar experiences that provided the basis for their conversation. Danny mentioned that he was in a rough stage of life and was living in the woods behind the nearby trailer park. He had no job and no way to get his life turned around.

Todd felt for Danny and really wanted to help him, but remembers sitting there at the table that day with many doubts and questions. The biggest one being: What can I really do to help?

Todd invited Danny to start meeting with him regularly to talk about life. Danny shared his story and heartbreaks and Todd shared his. The two of them started a friendship that put Todd face-to-face with the reality of poverty, homelessness and guilty pasts, a life completely different than one he had ever personally encountered. Together they walked through years of ups and downs as Todd stumbled through serving Danny, and Danny stumbled through trusting Todd. Neither of them really knew what they were doing but God continually strengthened their friendship and provided Todd with the opportunities and wisdom to love Danny through all of his life hurdles.

Todd used the contacts he had to help serve Danny and give him opportunities for employment and support. They walked through Danny's despair of alcoholism, lying and poor choices, as well as the joy of reconciliation, new beginnings and God's grace. Danny would get a job and then lose it, get a job and then lose it. "But each time," Todd recounts, "we learned a little more about ourselves, making good choices and the God who provides.... and forgives."

Together they wrestled with many fears, unknowns and questions—some Danny's and many Todd's. "I had no idea how to do this," Todd admits, "but I was continually convicted that Danny could not do this alone. Danny needed a friend, and, as I soon learned, a person who would listen and share in his pain."

It's been over eight years since Todd first met Danny and he has seen God do an incredible transformation in Danny's life and in his own.

Danny's recalls his friendship with Todd like this, "Todd helped to restore my self-confidence and dignity. He was my friend and showed me through his friendship that I was important and valuable." Though Danny is physically out of the woods, he still deals with some of his demons from the past. But Danny is light years ahead of where he was on Thanksgiving 2006, and like each of us, is still a work in progress.

It wasn't merely a hand-out that Danny needed, but rather a hand up. A friend willing to listen, care and encourage him through some dark times in life. What started as a simple outreach project by a church has grown into a great friendship; one never expected the day two men with completely different life experiences sat down at a table for a simple lunch together.

"GOD'S DEFINITION OF WHAT MATTERS IS PRETTY STRAIGHTFORWARD. HE MEASURES OUR LIVES BY HOW WE LOVE." - FRANCIS CHAN

## DISCUSSION

Last week you were asked to make a list describing the attributes of a loving act. What did you place on your list? Please share as a group.

**What do you think people living in poverty need most?**



A Christian volunteer living in the Phoenix area had become friends with a homeless person and asked her new friend this question: "Help me understand your needs. What is it that you (a homeless person) need most?" The person's response was this: "I know where to go to find services (food to eat, shelter to sleep, clothes to wear), what I really want is to be loved."

**What is your reaction to this answer?**

**How do you think this person interviewed defines love?**

**Why do you think the person interviewed distinguished the receiving of services as being something different from being loved?**

## ***The Power of Relationship***

In order to fully understand the nature of a loving act we must first understand the importance of relationships.

**In the story of Todd and Danny above what can we learn from the relationship they forged together?**

**Think about the friendships and relationships that you currently have. What are some of the characteristics that are most important to you in a good friend?**

Have you ever noticed how natural it is for kids to make friendships? Sometimes a child can be playing at the park, and within 5 minutes they can find friends and be laughing and playing together. As adults we seem to have hesitations and reservations about openly creating friendships with people we don't know. According to Nicole Zangara, a licensed clinical social worker, studies show that "as we get older, there can be a lot of fear around making friends. Asking an acquaintance out for coffee or lunch can make the most outgoing person feel vulnerable."<sup>[6]</sup>



Why might this reality be true for many adults? What do you find challenging about starting a new friendship?

Why is a relationship such an important part of being able to do loving acts towards the poor?

What fears tend to prevent you from befriending and doing loving acts towards the poor?

Are you willing to start a relationship with someone who would be considered 'vulnerable'? If yes, what steps can you take to start? If no, what is holding you back? How can you overcome these obstacles??

## DEPEND

Take a moment and meditate on 2 Corinthians 12:9, "*But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'*" Take time to pray for courage. Pray that God would show you clearly the strength that comes in moments of fear and weakness. Also, pray that God would help you gain the resolve to love others as He sent you to do.

## DISPERSE

Take a moment this week to evaluate who God might be placing in your path. Who are the vulnerable people that you come in contact with that you might begin a relationship with? Pray and ask God to show you one person that you could start to have a relationship with. Brainstorm and make a list of some ways that you could start to show them God's love this week. It may be as simple as a phone call or a note or stopping to talk to someone you see daily but don't know. Come to the next lesson prepared to share.

# LESSON 5 SENT FOR OBEDIENCE



In the book Same Kind of Different as Me Ron, a wealthy white man, meets Denver, a homeless African American man. After weeks of getting to slowly know each other, Ron asks Denver to be his friend. After thinking for several days about Ron's request Denver replies with this statement:

*"I heard that when white folks go fishin they do something called 'catch and release.'"*

*Catch and release? I (Ron) nodded solemnly, suddenly nervous and curious at the same time.*

*"That really bothers me," Denver went on. "I just can't figure it out. 'cause when colored folks go fishin, we really proud of what we catch, and we take it and show it off to everybody that'll look. Then we eat what we catch... in other words, we use it to sustain us. So it really bothers me that white folks would go to all the trouble to catch a fish, then when they done caught it, just throw it back in the water."*

*He paused again, and the silence between us stretched a full minute.*

*Then: "Did you hear what I said?"*

*I (Ron) nodded, afraid to speak, afraid to offend.*

*Denver looked away, searching the blue autumn sky, then locked onto me again with that drill-bit stare. "So, Mr. Ron, it occurred to me: If you is fishin for a friend you just goin' catch and release, then I ain't got no desire to be your friend."*



*The world seemed to halt in midstride and fall silent around us like one of those freeze-frame scenes on TV. I could hear my heart pounding and imagined Denver could see it popping my breast pocket up and down. I returned Denver's gaze with what I hoped was receptive expression and hung on.*

Suddenly his eyes gentled and he spoke more softly than before: "But if you is lookin for a real friend, then I'll be one. Forever."

Same Kind of Different As Me (pg. 106-107) <sup>[7]</sup>

*Obeying God's commands to love the vulnerable is like making friends forever.*

## DISCUSSION

Obedience can be defined as "dutifully complying with the commands, orders, or instructions of one in authority." <sup>[8]</sup>

**Do you tend to see obedience as a negative or positive word? Why?**

Think for a moment about some of the stories presented throughout the Bible. Together as a group, list four or more examples of people obeying God even if the task given them was very uncomfortable and difficult.

Read John 14:15.

**What is our motivation for obedience?**

**How is it that we show God we love Him?**

**"AND DO NOT FORGET TO DO GOOD AND TO SHARE WITH OTHERS,  
FOR WITH SUCH SACRIFICES GOD IS PLEASED."  
- HEBREWS 13:16**

**Why do you think that obedience and doing good to others pleases God?**

Christians are called to be participants, not spectators. It was once said that we as believers can learn through good instruction and sound teaching, but we really cannot grow if we remain uninvolved in the ministry of loving others.

**How do you feel Christians grow when they serve others?**

The Bible says that when we give ourselves away for the sake of others, it is then that we actually gain life (Matthew 16:25). We show up to “change” others and we are the ones actually changed. We are changed because we often meet Jesus in the face and needs of others (Matthew 25:45). In fact, 1 John 4:12 says, “When we love one another God’s love is made *complete* in us.”

**What do you think it means to have God’s love “completed” in you?**

Stepping into the space of need is often messy and awkward, and it is especially difficult in a culture that seeks comfort and quick results. However, while obedience is challenging, the richness that comes from pursuing God by loving others is immeasurable. The life of a Christian is characterized by loving others.

**“BY THIS EVERYONE WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER” (JOHN 13:35)**

**What do you think you will need to do or adjust in your life in order to make the command to love the vulnerable a consistent reality in your life?**

**Each person who has chosen to follow Jesus has been sent. As a family or small group how do you think you could support each other in this endeavor to love the vulnerable?**

## DISPERSE

As followers of God, Jesus commands us: *"If you love me, keep my commands"* (John 14:15). As we have seen throughout this study, the call to love others, in particular the vulnerable, is a clear and undeniable command. As mentioned, Christians are called to be participants and not just spectators. We are encouraged not just to love *"with words or speech but with actions and in truth"* (1 John 3:18).

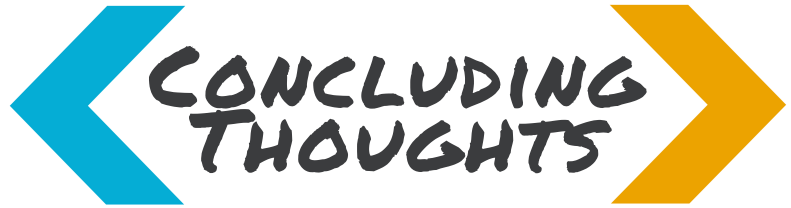
As you close this study and think about your life moving forward, may you grasp the fullness of God in loving others, and see the earthly and eternal joy that comes with loving those that are forgotten and vulnerable.

Last week you identified a few vulnerable people that you come in contact with. You also prayed through and chose one that you were going to intentionally seek to build a relationship with. From there you made a list of things that you could do. Share with the group some of the ideas that you had.

**What is one thing you will do this week to continue to build that relationship?**

## DEPEND

Spend time praying for each other. Ask God to give creativity and inspiration for fruitful relationships and friendships. Ask that God would reveal to each of you how to best care for the individuals that you have felt led to love. Pray as well that your growth in Christ would become evident to all those around you and that being sent would become contagious.



# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

On behalf of Reconciled World, thank you for walking through this study. We highly recommend that you stay connected to the others in your group and continue to share encouraging words. Plan to find a time in one month to check back in with your group and to share your experiences. During this time, encourage each other in your relationships and celebrate what God has been doing in you and in your new friends.

**Please let us know what thoughts, questions or experiences come from this study.** Also, please share with us through email what kind of outreaches come as a result of this study. We would love to know what God does in your life and the life of those you start to love!

In all you do, give God thanks for the opportunity to worship Him through loving others. Take joy in the promises of God given to the Israelites found in Exodus 19:5:

*"NOW IF YOU OBEY ME FULLY AND KEEP MY  
COVENANT, THEN OUT OF ALL NATIONS YOU WILL BE  
MY TREASURED POSSESSION."*



## **Lesson 1**

[1] <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/american.study.reveals.indulgent.lifestyle.christians.no.different/9439.htm>

[2] Stott, John. "Involvement: Being a Responsible Christian in a Non-Christian Society." F.H. Revell Co., 1985.

## **Lesson 2**

[3] <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vulnerable>

[4] Stott, John. "Involvement: Being a Responsible Christian in a Non-Christian Society." F.H. Revell Co., 1985.

## **Lesson 3**

[5] Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert (2009). When Helping Hurts. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers

## **Lesson 4**

[6] <https://experiencelife.com/article/making-friends-as-an-adult/>

## **Lesson 5**

[7] Ron Hall and Denver Moore (2006). Same Kind of Different as Me. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson

[8] <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/obedient>