



## Topics: Transportation and Service

### What if students learned about serving through studying transportation?

Phil's class had begun a unit on transportation. They had already constructed a chart of the various forms of transportation systems and what they are used for.

"I introduced the second lesson by writing on the board, 'We need to travel so that we can ...'. The students, in pairs, were asked to come up with some endings for the sentence, and their suggestions were recorded. Then I completed the sentence myself by adding '... serve others.' This led into a time of discussion on how transportation could be used for traveling to serve others.

"I divided the class into groups of three or four, and asked for one person from each group to select an unseen card from a box. I had written a scenario on each card; for example:

- There was a big earthquake in Haiti. The people there have no fresh water.
- The Carter family lives in a remote location a long way from the hospital. Mrs. Carter is very sick.
- Mr. Jones is very old and lives alone. He can't cook anymore.

"Each group was asked to think of a way in which transportation could be used to care for or serve these people. They drew simple charts demonstrating their ideas.

"I invited a volunteer driver to talk about how she used her car to take people to the hospital, to go shopping, and to run other errands that needed transportation. The students then discussed what the transportation needs of the community might be and how transportation could serve those needs."

### What's going on here?

The existing unit focused on how transportation is used to make our own lives easier. However, Phil also saw transportation as a means of service and seeking the good of others.

He engaged students in rethinking existing assumptions (brainstorming endings) and then challenged them to actively respond (service focus, groups coming up with suggestions). He also had students interact with someone from the community.

He reshaped his practice by using a key concept (service) to refocus the lesson, by designing activities to get students to actively engage with the focus and express their responses (card activity, charts), and by making space to learn from a visitor from the community.

## What does this have to do with faith, hope, and love?

Service is a practical aspect of love. Jesus modeled service and said that he had come to serve others, not to be served. Christians describe Jesus as the “Servant King.” He redefined service as having status in the kingdom of God, saying that those who want to be first must serve (Mark 9:35). Any gifts Christians possess are entrusted to them in order to be used in the service of others.

## What difference does it make?

Much of the information in Phil’s transportation unit would be unchanged, but the change of framework meant that students could engage with the material differently. They saw transportation as serving people’s needs. Phil did not need to focus only on volunteer service; a focus on service could be widened so that food transportation is seen as servicing people’s physical needs, library vans as serving intellectual and recreation needs, and so on. This means that people working in a range of fields can view their work in terms of service.

## Where could we go from here?

As well as the above suggestion, the following could be explored:

- Look into charities and organizations that use traveling for compassionate ends, such as Angel MedFlight, Mercy Ships, and Missionary Aviation Fellowship; or to fulfill the wishes of very sick children (Make a Wish, Starlight Foundation).
- Explore Christian concern for the environment in relation to transportation choices, such as wise stewardship of God's creation in regard to sustainability, pollution, etc.
- Study Christian pilgrimages (modern and past) and biblical pilgrimage festivals.
- In addition to taking the usual field trips (museums, libraries, etc.), plan a trip using a few forms of transportation for serving others. For example, take a bus or train to travel to sing at a nursing home, or pick up elderly people and take them shopping at Christmas.
- Look for other curriculum units that focus on fulfilling our own needs, and consider how you could adapt them to a service emphasis.

## Digging deeper

The Bible states that Jesus gave up everything and came in human form as a servant ([Philippians 2:7](#)). Jesus said that he had come not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many ([Mark 10:45](#)). Servants were the hired hands and slaves of Jesus's time. Jesus took the word *slave* and gave it a new and radical meaning. He took a word that described a person of lesser status under the authority of others, and redefined it in terms of leadership and greatness. He washed his disciples' feet and expected his followers to be willing to act similarly ([John 13:14-15](#)). Jesus made it clear that in the kingdom of God, those who are greatest are those who serve God and others.

*The duty is now emphasized of serving God in the world, in every position in life. Abraham Kuyper*

For Christians, giving is in response to God's giving of himself in Jesus. Giving and receiving are essential parts of Christian community life and part of serving the wider community ([1 Peter 4:10](#)). The Bible describes this as sowing: putting time, love, skill, effort, and money into others. In turn, people reap what they sow. It is not a rigid

equation, but those who sow love are more likely to reap it ([2 Corinthians 9:6-7](#)). Service should distinguish the Christian way of life at work, in the home, and in relationships.

Our society looks for freedom and happiness in wealth, fame, and power. The Bible sees it in giving and serving others. One Episcopalian prayer describes the service of God as "perfect freedom." Those words, *cui servire, regnare est* translate as "to serve is to reign." To serve God and others is the highest honor; it is what we were created for.

*One thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve. Albert Schweitzer*

**Next:** Serving the Community  
What if a topic on "People who hel..."

