



# FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

## FOR ADULT LEADERS

### THE PROJECT

In early July, 2005, a video crew from the LCMS Youth Ministry Office took part in a week-long Servant Event with a youth group from the Mid West. From planning meetings, to the farewell family barbeque, YMO staff were a part of the Mountain Builders' Servant Event preparation. During the Event, a staff member served as a Family Group Leader for a small group. The video crew drove alongside the 55 passenger coach bus from Missouri to Colorado. The crew ate with the group, slept in similar cabin accommodations as the group, and participated in service projects with the group. All of this was done in an effort to capture, as closely as possible, the experiences of one youth group through a Servant Event: From Start to Finish, and to share its story as a tool to nurture the preparation of groups for future Events.

The result is a six-segment story told through the voices and experiences of six individual youth. These unscripted youth are not paid actors. They were encouraged to be genuine, even to tell the crew they "didn't know" if a certain question stumped them. While the setting is unique to the mountains, the From Start to Finish story is an insider's look at the unique growth and nurture that happens for hundreds of teens each summer as a part of more than 80 LCMS Servant Events hosted nationwide.

### USING THIS RESOURCE

From Start to Finish resource is designed for use in congregational youth ministry settings. The six segments may be used individually over a series of meetings or viewed in one session. The viewing guide is designed for use in six forty-five minute sessions. Viewing Guides include an opening activity and questions for discussion before and after viewing the clip.

From Start to Finish can be used in a variety of settings.

1. Youth leaders may want to use the entire piece as part of a meeting that encourages youth to consider attending a Servant Event.
2. The segments may be used over the course of several weeks as youth leaders work with youth who have signed up to attend an Event.
3. The segments can be used as a six-part series on Servanthood.

As leaders watch the segments, they should consider what setting might be the most useful for sharing From Start to Finish with their youth. Tips for leading group discussions are provided at the end of this guide.

### THE AUDIENCE

From Start to Finish is designed for use with a senior high youth audience. The story of the event is told by youth, for youth. It can be used alongside facilitated discussion, as provided by the six viewing guides, or independently. From Start to Finish will be enjoyable to adults, and definitely encouraging to them, but the primary audience is teenagers, age 14-19. Other elements on this DVD (such as the informational video) were developed specifically with parents and congregational leaders as the target audience.

### THE PERSPECTIVE

From Start to Finish is the summer Servant Event story of one Mid West LCMS congregation. YMO video crew and staff spent time interviewing the youth and six youth, representing a variety of the typical "spiritual" growth edges of typical teens in typical congregations, were identified as the narrative voices for the project. The six youth are not meant to be viewed as "perfect" youth, or overly dramatized "characters".

Hundreds of hours of interviews were captured over the course of the week-long Event. Often, the youth's comments about faith and spiritual growth are phrased in a way that seems "maturing," which it is! What is also expressed are the doubts, fears, joys, struggles, high points, and valleys of a teenage faith being nurtured through the experience of an LCMS Servant Event. The video crew worked diligently to tell the story of each individual youth as he or she changed and grew through the event, without over editing or contriving to alter the real comments of the teens.

This discussion guide is designed as one tool to nurture and grow the faith of youth viewers alongside the youth voices in this video.

Here is a bit about each youth featured in From Start to Finish:

#### Dustin:

A junior in high school, Dustin has attended two previous Servant Events. Dustin is a strong young man, whose work ethic is driven by a desire to set the pace and work as hard as physically possible. Early in the video, Dustin admits that his greatest challenge is learning to incorporate what he knows about God into His daily life.

#### Emily:

A junior in high school, this is Emily's first Servant Event experience. Emily is academically very gifted, and the viewer quickly realizes that Emily knows the right words to say to express her faith. Emily is learning how to take her faith beyond "head" knowledge, but she doesn't really realize this is the change that is happening.

#### Kelsey:

Kelsey is a sophomore. Mountain Builders is her first Servant Event. Kelsey is a normal kid with normal expectations and normal experiences. She is a refreshing youth voice because of her even keeled "life is great" attitude. Kelsey desires to incorporate her faith life into a more personal devotion life at home.

#### Chris Gatzke:

Gatzke is a senior in high school. He is humorous and outgoing. Gatzke is the oldest of the group, having just graduated high school. And at times, his comments are a more selective, as he is well aware that this event is the last "organized" youth group experience he will have for awhile. Gatzke is ready to grow in applying his faith to his life.

#### Chris Mejja:

Chris is another junior. He leads a comfortable, suburban life. Mountain Builders is Chris' second Servant Event experience. He is a genuine young man, who recognizes that he is uncomfortable sharing his Christian faith in new situations and hopes the Servant Event gives him opportunities to grow in this area.

#### Amanda Mejja:

Amanda is our freshman. She is bright and articulate. Amanda is a thinker AND a feeler. She struggles with doubt, not an uncommon thing for any Christian. Yet she knows that Jesus has plans for her life. This is Amanda's first Servant Event.



# FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

## FOR ADULT LEADERS

### THE STORY

From Start to Finish follows the individual story of six youth as they participate in a week-long LCMS summer Servant Event with their congregational youth group. Through these six individual stories the collective Servant Event “group story” that hundreds of youth and adults share each summer is told.

#### Day One: The Arrival

The group arrives at Lutheran Valley Retreat (LVR) after a two-day journey from Missouri. They are eager, excited, and apprehensive. New surroundings, new community, and new expectations come up against each teen’s enthusiasm. In the final interviews of the evening, teens share their personal challenges, and we begin to realize how these personal stories will shape the experience each youth takes away from the Event.

#### Day Two: The Expectation

Waking up to their first full day of camp life, serving, and learning, the youth share their expectations for the Event, and quickly realize they don’t entirely know what to expect! Participating in Challenge Course activities, working various service projects, and ending the day with a strenuous climb up Cedar Mountain, the youth recognize that what they expected from the event will be far outweighed by what they will actually experience.

#### Day Three: The Comfort Zone

It has been a day of firsts. Tired, working at tasks that don’t necessarily interest them, recovering from the challenges of the previous day, and learning to live and grow in a new community, the youth begin to realize what it means to be pushed from their comfort zones. At the end of the day, the youth are surprised to learn that the Human Care service element they thought they were going to lead is completely changed. It is a new challenge that redefines what is comfortable.

#### Day Four: The Challenge

Today the youth serve by choice, selecting new projects that appeal to them. They spend time preparing to lead the Human Care element and rise to meet the challenges facing them. As their youth leader encourages them to, “Go! Go! Go!” the youth recognize that not only are they challenged by external events, but they are also challenged by their own hopes for personal/spiritual growth. At the end of the day, the campfire devotion provides direct encouragement to meet the Challenge that faces the group the next day, through Christ’s grace and mercy.

#### Day Five: The Change

The youth travel from the camp to lead a Human Care element in a neighboring town, and encounter people very different from themselves. Because of the work of the Spirit in their hearts throughout the Servant Event experience (and beyond) the youth are encouraged to freely share their love for Jesus, and begin to express how their faith has changed and been nurtured through the week-long experience. It is also time to focus on returning home with a new and enlivened hope.

#### Day Six: The Return

The segment begins with another youth grouper sharing, “Coming back down though, that’s gonna be tough.” For the group, it is time to begin the return journey back to “real life.” The youth reflect on what the Servant Event has meant for their spiritual growth. They share their hopes for their faith life at home. They express a genuine desire to return home to “put their faith to work.” They leave us with a final encouragement to consider taking a Servant Event journey of our own, by Christ’s guiding.

LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD  
FROM START  
TO FINISH



# FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

## DAY ONE: THE ARRIVAL

**The group arrives at Lutheran Valley Retreat (LVR) after a two-day journey from Missouri. They are eager, excited, and apprehensive. New surroundings, new community, and new expectations come up against each teen's enthusiasm. In the final interviews of the evening, teens share their personal challenges, and we begin to realize how these personal stories will shape the experience each youth takes away from the Event.**

### OPENING ACTIVITY *David, Goliath, and Bathsheba*

Recommended # of People: 10 and over  
Messiness Factor: Sweaty  
Materials Required: None  
Recommended Setting: Outdoor  
Purpose: FUN and Fellowship/Community Builder

Instructions: This game is comparable to Rock, Paper, Scissors; and involves three different symbols with which to play the game.

David's sign is twirling one's fist in the air as if throwing a sling.

Goliath's sign is throwing one's hands in the air to show the size and strength of Goliath.

Bathsheba's sign is motioning one's hands behind the back to show Bathsheba scrubbing her back.

David beats Goliath, Goliath beats Bathsheba, and Bathsheba beats David.

The group is divided into two teams and line up across from each other with six feet between the teams. Each group decides on what sign to become at the count of three. Also, teams choose a back-up sign just in case the two teams throw the same sign. In the case of two teams throwing the same sign, the alternate sign is immediately used. It may be easier to choose a captain, especially for large groups. The object of the game is to win the sign at the count of three and then tag the opposing team's members. Once a team member has been tagged, he becomes part of the opposing team. The game is played until one team runs out of people.

### DISCUSSION PART ONE

Share a time when you eagerly anticipated an event that you KNEW was coming (perhaps the First Day of School, a holiday, perhaps a special event for school like Homecoming or the state playoffs, or even a family trip).

When we finally arrive at events we have been waiting for, what kinds of emotions do we encounter? What kind of questions?

Describe a situation when you have been somewhere ENTIRELY new. What do you notice about yourself when first arriving in a new setting with new people?

Have you ever been on a Servant Event? What type of words would you associate with the idea of a Servant Event?

How do you think a group of teenagers would prepare to arrive at a week-long Servant Event? How would you prepare your attitude for this type of experience?

## SEGMENT ONE: THE ARRIVAL

Leader (set-up the clip): Each summer, youth groups around the country participate in week-long Servant Events at camps and churches across our Church. We are going to discover what happens on Servant Events, beyond just learning about buildings being constructed or fences being built.

This video provides an inside look at what happens for teenagers on a Servant Event. Through their eyes, we will consider what might be in store for us as we serve Christ where we live and where He leads us as His servants.

(Leader: If your group is already signed up for an event, connect that situation to WHY you are watching this video. If you are using this video to encourage youth to attend an event you are planning, make that connection at this time.)

This video shares the experience of one youth group as they travel on a week-long servant event to Colorado. There are 58 youth in the group; and we will learn about their experience through the eyes of six youth narrators. (Leader: Share a bit about each youth narrator. Explain that these youth were unscripted and were asked to reflect openly and honestly about their experience so that viewers might be nurtured in their faith and understanding.) The first day is called, The Arrival. Let's see how it all begins ...

Play Segment One: The Arrival (Running Time: 10:01)

### DISCUSSION PART TWO

What are your first impressions of the youth? With whom do you most closely relate at this point? Given what you know, or anticipate, about Servant Events, which youth do you think is in for the greatest change?

The youth will be serving for one week. Does that seem like a long time to you? Explain.

How does each youth describe a Servant Event? (Leader: Chris describes it as "life changing." Amanda comments that it involves, "going out and doing what I can to help people." Gatzke shares that a Servant Event is "self-explanatory ... it's where you go somewhere and do something for someone else, because it needs to be done." Discuss with your students the common idea that service involves "going somewhere" (*Spoiler Alert:* watch for this notion to CHANGE throughout the video). Discuss the idea that the event might be "life changing" - what might Chris be talking about?)

The youth take part in Community Building. What would make a similar situation challenging for you? What do you think will be the impact of building a good community on the events of the week?

During the Evening Bible Study, the youth are asked to consider the call of Christ, when he called the Disciples to come and be "fishers of men." The youth are asked: Are there nets in your life that are holding you back from following that call? What nets seem to face each youth? With which of these nets can you relate? (Leader: Dustin shares that he is not living a "perfect life," he admits that growing in his faith would mean incorporating his beliefs into his daily life. Amanda struggles with doubt sharing, "Everyone has a little bit of doubt ... that's just human nature to doubt things," and she shares a desire to be freed from such doubt. Chris shares that he wants to be more open in talking about His faith. Kelsey explains that she complains, "a lot.")



## FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

### DAY ONE: THE ARRIVAL

The group arrives to Lutheran Valley Retreat (LVR) after a two-day journey from Missouri. They are eager, excited, and apprehensive. New surroundings, new community, and new expectations come up against each teen's enthusiasm. In the final interviews of the evening, teens share their personal challenges, and we begin to realize how these personal stories will shape the experience each youth takes away from the Event.

### DISCUSSION PART TWO (CONTINUED)

The Bible Study leader shares, "Sometimes it may seem that we have an irrational assignment" (referring to the Servant Event facing the youth). Are there times when it seems as if God leads us in ways that are "irrational" compared with the way the world thinks? Describe such a time.

The Bible Study leader goes on to share, "Christ has already seen the work you're going to do; he's helped to prepare the work that's supposed to happen and he's preparing you. And in those works, we need to anticipate overwhelming results, not because of our own gifts and abilities, but because God is present." How does this comment change the outlook these youth might have of the week to come? How does it already begin to shift their priorities in being on this Event?

At the end of the segment, the interviewer asks Gatzke, "Tell me how you think serving and striving together and doing Bible Study together on this mountain is going to help make that happen?" The interviewer is talking about a "change" that Gatzke says is coming. Gatzke can't really answer. Share what his honest reaction says to you. Do you agree with him? What might be making it difficult for him to answer the question?

**CLOSE** in prayer.

LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD  
FROM START  
TO FINISH



# FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

## DAY TWO: THE EXPECTATION

**Waking up to their first full day of camp life, serving, and learning, the youth share their expectations for the Event, and quickly realize they don't entirely know what to expect! Participating in Challenge Course activities, working various service projects, and ending the day with a strenuous climb up Cedar Mountain, the youth recognize that what they expected from the event will be far outweighed by what they will actually experience.**

### OPENING ACTIVITY *How Do We Feel About Feet?*

Recommended # of People: Any  
Materials Required: None  
Recommended Setting: Any  
Purpose: Object Lesson/Community Builder

Instructions: Individuals form pairs and face one another on the floor. One at a time, each member of the pair slowly removes the other person's shoes and socks. Once enough time has passed for the activity to happen, SAY: "How do we feel about feet?"

Scripture Focus: Ask participants to open their Bibles to John 13:1-16. Invite several students to read the passage aloud as others follow along.

### ASK:

1. What is unexpected about Jesus washing the disciples' feet?
2. In what ways does this chore seem far removed from our lives today?
3. How did the disciples react to Jesus washing their feet?
4. Why do you think they responded as they did?
5. What was the most important thing Jesus wanted to teach his disciples through this act?

### SAY:

We may wonder why Jesus washed the disciples' feet. But in first-century Judea, there was no indoor plumbing, no running water in homes, and a person who entered a house, after removing his or her sandals, was given a basin of water to wash in. This lowly task was often performed by the house servant. Washing someone's feet was a most humble chore; it was a common, everyday dirty task. When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he was not only performing a chore, but he was demonstrating the heart of a servant. And he was changing the expectations we have of servants and redefining our understanding of servanthood.

*From the 2006 LCMS Servant Event Bible Study, The Servant Extreme.*

### DISCUSSION PART ONE

Think about your expectations for situations and people. What expectations do you have about the following situations? (How do you expect each to happen, what involvement do you expect each to require of you, etc.)

- Sunday Morning Worship
- My Toughest Class at School
- My Summer Job

Consider a time when what you EXPECTED was different from what really happened in a situation. Share three words or thoughts that defined how it felt not to have your expectations met. (Leaders: Most youth may be led to share negative examples. Push the youth to consider sharing an example where it was a positive thing to have their expectations altered. Be prepared with a story of your own to share!)

What would be a risky setting for you in service to the Lord? Singing in front of your friends? Working at a shelter? Knocking on neighborhood doors and sharing your faith? Going on a Servant Event? What common ideas from these examples can we generate into a group definition for what it means when something is "risky" in terms of our servant/faith life?

### SEGMENT TWO: THE EXPECTATION

Leader (set-up the clip): Last time, we were introduced to six youth who eagerly arrived for a Servant Event in the mountains of Colorado. We learned about how they arrived and what their personal challenges were as the week began. Each of these youth also arrived with a set of expectations for how they think the experience will play out. In this segment we discover, along with the youth, how their expectations are reinforced or completely altered by the first full day of life at camp. Let's see what happens today ...

Play Segment Two: The Expectation (Running Time: 10:07)

### DISCUSSION PART TWO

The day begins with the chance to "remind [us] why we're here." What do you think would lead a "typical" youth to sign-up for this week-long trip?

The leader shares that he wants the youth to become more "transparent" in their willingness to share. The day begins with Challenge Course activities designed to help create this type of community. How will a strong sense of community impact the event of the week both physically and spiritually?

How do the youth intend to approach their first serving experience? (Leader: Amanada wants to be "open minded." Gatzke wants to "be as helpful as I can.")

If you were a part of this group, how would you have felt about the work projects Trigger describes? Which task would you have wanted to do?

The youth had expectations for serving and most were off base. Amanda says, "It's not what I expected, but I like it." How are these unmet expectations leading to a changed attitude about serving? How might this event be VERY different if their youth had all of their expectations met at every step?

The Bible Study leader shares, "Christ, God Himself, did what no one noticed. He did it to remind you and I that when we serve, we're to serve for one reason: in response to what God has done for us. It's not so others see our good works. It's not so that we feel better about ourselves." How does this idea challenge what the world and our society teaches us about volunteerism and doing "good"?

The group makes an unexpected climb to the top of Cedar Mountain. This climb can be seen as a metaphor for the individual experience each youth will have during the Servant Event. Amanda says, "There are some people that would be so hard for, and it would be a big risk to come up here and leave all of your comfortable life behind ..." What kind of risks would such a trip mean for you?

Amanda finishes by saying, "God was watching us. He knew what he was doing when he brought us up to that mountain." What changes do you think God has in store for these youth? What do you hope happens for them?

**CLOSE** in prayer



# FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

## DAY THREE: THE COMFORT ZONE

**It has been a day of firsts. Tired, working at tasks that don't necessarily interest them, recovering from the challenges of the previous day, and learning to live and grow in a new community, the youth begin to realize what it means to be pushed from their comfort zones. At the end of the day, the youth are surprised to learn that the Human Care service element they thought they were going to lead is completely changed. It is a new challenge that redefines what is comfortable.**

### OPENING ACTIVITY *A 'Forced Trust' Walk*

Recommended # of People: Any

Safety Factor: Moderate. Be cautious about the boundaries you allow for this game. Be sure that you are facilitating the activity in a safe, relatively "open" space. Do not allow anyone to lead their partner to intentionally tricky or dangerous areas where footing is unsure. Before the activity begins, explain that individuals who do not respect the safety of their partners will be asked to stop participating in the game.

Materials Required: Blindfolds for half of the group.

Recommended Setting: Open field or multipurpose room.

Purpose: Object Lesson/Community Builder

Instructions: Individuals form pairs and take turns leading one another around the playing field. One member of the team is blindfolded. The other team member leads the individual without physically touching them, using voice commands, clapping, etc. Partners learn how to listen and respond to one other in the midst of other voices and sounds. Allow each partner a turn as the blindfolded person. Each "journey" should last approximately 4 minutes.

At the end of the activity, DISCUSS:

1. Share general feelings and thoughts about this activity.
2. How comfortable were you in this activity? Which role was more comfortable to you?
3. What did your team do that worked well? What could you have done that might have worked better?
4. How can we apply this experience to "real life" situations that are new, or that remove us from our comfort zone?

### DISCUSSION PART ONE

In what physical setting are you most comfortable? With what type of people are you most comfortable?

What is a "comfort zone"?

Describe a time when you have been taken out of your comfort zone. How did you cope with the situation? What helped you manage the situation?

### SEGMENT THREE: THE COMFORT ZONE

Leader (set-up the clip): In this segment, we are going to encounter the youth being pushed out of their comfort zones. They are tired, worn-out, but still serving. Their mountain climb was just the start of being pulled from their comfort zone; as we will see at the end of today's segment when all of their remaining expectations for the Servant Event are challenged by the assignment of a brand-new task they never anticipated. Let's take a look ...

Play Segment Three: The Comfort Zone (Running Time: 8:13)

### DISCUSSION PART TWO

The group begins by reflecting on the Cedar Mountain climb. Emily shares that she thought the climb would be a "paved path." In a larger sense, how might that statement apply to the expectations many youth carry into serving experiences in general? Do you think this experience has been "harder" than they anticipated? In what ways?

The Bible study leader says, "You've heard me talk about 'comfort zones.' When you push yourself beyond your comfort zone, that's when true growth happens." What do you think this statement means? In what ways do you see these youth being pushed (by their choice or others) from their comfort zone? How might this impact their lives' back home?

Kelsey says, "I guess I'm motivated to keep working even though I'm tired just because it's just part of a Servant's heart." How is Kelsey's comment meaningful? How might the Holy Spirit be working to change the youths' understanding of what it means to be a Servant?

The youth have spent the first part of the week working at construction projects. How has this work prepared them to complete a human care service project, where they will encounter people not objects?

The youth are thrown by the change to their expectations for their human care event. How would you have reacted to the news that instead of working with children in a vacation Bible school setting, you instead were going to be creating original skits to take along with your witness to share with adults recovering from drug and alcohol addictions? How do the youth react?

At the end of the segment, Chris shares that when he learned that the people he would be encountering might be "going to Hell ... it was like, 'wow' ... when you think about that it's like ... well ... it's something you really don't want to think about." React to Chris' statement. How can you relate to what he is expressing?

At this point in the Servant Event, with which youth do you most closely identify? What is leading you to feel more connected to his or her story? What are your hopes for each youth as the journey continues?

**CLOSE** in prayer





# FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

## DAY FOUR: THE CHALLENGE

Today the youth serve by choice, selecting new projects that appeal to them. They spend time preparing to lead the Human Care element and rise to meet the challenges facing them. As their youth leader encourages them to, "Go! Go! Go!" the youth recognize that not only are they challenged by external events, but they are also challenged by their own hopes for personal/spiritual growth. At the end of the day, the campfire devotion provides direct encouragement to meet the Challenge that faces the group the next day, through Christ's grace and mercy.

### OPENING ACTIVITY *I Want to Be Hungry!*

Recommended # of People: Any  
Materials Required: Bibles  
Recommended Setting: Any  
Purpose: Experiential Object Lesson

Instructions: Ask participants to find a comfortable place to sit and to close their eyes. Assure them that no one will touch them. (One leader took his entire group by canoe into the middle of a lake in Idaho and shared this devotion. This devotion can be used in multiple settings. Be creative.)

Say the following, adding ten-second pauses as indicated so that participants have time to focus and imagine.

#### SAY:

Picture a wide, white, sandy beach. *Pause.* The sun is warm, the sky is a brilliant blue, and the beach is empty. *Pause.* Sea gulls wheel and turn overhead. *Pause.* Palm trees sway behind you. *Pause.* Waves break out away from shore. Picture the cool, turquoise water gently reaching up onto the beach and the rolling back. *Pause.* You feel the sand between your toes as you stroll. *Pause.* This is the ultimate vacation. You're content. *Pause.* You're happy. *Pause.* You wish you could be here, relaxed and satisfied, forever. *Pause.*

Ask the participants to open their eyes.

#### SAY:

I am going to share the same scene with you. But this time your role is different. You are to close your eyes and hold your breath throughout the reading. Take as few breaths as possible without passing out.

Using the same pace as the first reading, share the script a second time.

#### ASK:

1. How were your two imaginary vacations alike? Different?
2. When you were holding your breath, how difficult or easy was it for you to keep your focus on the images I was asking you to imagine? Why?

Scripture Focus: Read Psalm 42:1-2 to the group.

#### ASK:

1. During our activity, our physical hunger for oxygen took center stage when we weren't getting it. What would your life be like if your hunger for God had the same urgency and immediacy?
2. What are some ways by which you can increase your spiritual "hunger" for God? (Leader: We know it is by the Spirit that we are empowered to know God and grow in faith. This question is designed to encourage youth to consider practical ways to daily grow with God).

*From the 2006 LCMS Servant Event Bible Study, The Servant Extreme.*

## DISCUSSION PART ONE

What challenges exist for you (physically, emotionally, and spiritually) in serving another person?

What is the difference between simply helping another person and forming a relationship with the person you are helping? What makes loving someone more challenging than just helping them?

What do you think is the difference between serving someone and having an attitude of servanthood? (Leader: Help youth understand that service is "doing good" to or for someone. Servanthood, which was modeled by Jesus, involves relationship alongside someone and goes beyond immediate needs. Service is an action. Servanthood is an attitude.)

## SEGMENT FOUR: THE CHALLENGE

Leader (set-up the clip): Today the youth will take on service, with an attitude of servanthood. All week they have been assigned to tasks, but today they select their own tasks. All week they have been working with construction projects, but today they will prepare to form relationships with people outside of their community as they serve God and share His love with others. In the midst of their own challenges (worries, doubts, and insecurities) the youth are strengthened by the Holy Spirit to be Servants for Christ. Check this out ...

Play Segment Four: The Challenge (Running Time: 9:28)

## DISCUSSION PART TWO

The segment begins with the title, "Recognizing their own doubts and fears, the youth are faced with opportunities to take on new challenges." Earlier this week, the Bible study leader asked the youth what "nets" of sin existed that held them back from Christ's call. Why is it important for the youth to "recognize" these nets as they face new challenges and opportunities?

How do you react to challenges? How are the youth learning to approach challenges through the Challenge Course activities at camp?

About the trust factor and the Challenge Course, Gatzke says, "It's almost a forced trust." Describe a situation in your life where you have had to have a "forced trust" in someone or something.

On this day of service, the youth have the opportunity to sign-up for what interests them. This approach is a change. Why do you think this option was not given on the first days of serving (when tasks were assigned, not chosen)? What does this suggest about the youths' attitudes?

What fears do you hear in the words of the youth as they contemplate the human care project? How do these fears connect to the "nets" you heard the youth share in segment one? (Leader: Emily shares a concern about not "forcing" the message down the throats of the participants. This is interesting given that Emily has always been the one to "say" the right thing. Actually "doing" it is a challenge for her. Dustin expresses that "these people aren't just going to come right out and say 'hey, this is what I did,'" which connects to Dustin's initial comment that he doesn't live the "perfect life" and wants to more deeply integrate God's commands into his daily living. Chris, who has shared that he lacks an openness in talking about his faith, is naturally concerned about "just striking up a conversation with someone you've never met and you're never ever going to see again.")



## FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

### DAY FOUR: THE CHALLENGE

Today the youth serve by choice, selecting new projects that appeal to them. They spend time preparing to lead the Human Care element and rise to meet the challenges facing them. As their youth leader encourages them to, "Go! Go! Go!" the youth recognize that not only are they challenged by external events, but they are also challenged by their own hopes for personal/spiritual growth. At the end of the day, the campfire devotion provides direct encouragement to meet the Challenge that faces the group the next day, through Christ's grace and mercy.

### DISCUSSION PART TWO (CONTINUED)

Emily says, "We just have to rely on the Holy Spirit to work through us and help us know what to say." Her response certainly seems like a "right" answer. But would this be enough for you to overcome your own "nets" if you were in this same situation? Explain. (Leaders: This sharing is an important opportunity to express that it is God who wills and works in us despite our weakness. In fact, he uses our weaknesses to demonstrate his goodness and grace.)

How important is it that the group's leader expresses confidence in their abilities? He has made it clear all week that it is GOD who works in them, but he still takes time to encourage them. Would such encouragement be a benefit to you? In what way?

The youth did the same activity as you did at the start of this discussion guide. They, too, answered the question, "What if your urgency and your focus on your spiritual life was as strong as taking a breath?" How were your answers similar to or different from theirs? (Leader: It is essential to share that it is by the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to grow in our spiritual life. As sinful people, of our own efforts we cannot increase our "urgency." It is by God's grace alone that we mature in faith.)

The youth have been challenged by the Word, their own hopes, and even by their parents. What might your parents share with you if they had the chance to encourage you to attend a Servant Event? How do you think they would want the event to impact your faith life?

The Campfire Devotion takes a direct look at the doubt and fears the youth have been expressing. Many of them have expressed that their own "small" faith makes them incapable of boldly sharing that faith with the strangers at the human care event. What truths are shared that give them, and you, encouragement to serve, share, and witness Jesus?

How do you think the human care event is going to go?

**CLOSE** in prayer

LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD  
FROM START  
TO FINISH



# FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

## DAY FIVE: THE CHANGE

The youth travel from the camp to lead a Human Care element in a neighboring town, and encounter people very different from themselves. Because of the work of the Spirit in their hearts throughout the Servant Event experience (and beyond) the youth are encouraged to freely share their love for Jesus, and begin to express how their faith has changed and been nurtured through the week-long experience. It is also time to focus on returning home with a new and enlivened hope.

### DISCUSSION PART ONE

Consider all of the individuals who have shared the Good News with you in your life. With a partner, share the ways God used this person in your life.

When you think about serving others - does it include sharing the Gospel?

How is being a Servant for Jesus different than just being a "good works" volunteer?

What things do you think the Holy Spirit could change in your life, and in the lives of your friends, that would lead you to share the Good News more frequently with those around you?

### SEGMENT FIVE: THE CHANGE

Leader (set-up the clip): The six youth have come a long way from their arrival to camp. Their expectations have been shifted, and redirected toward God's purpose. In serving the camp, they have become students of the Master Servant and have been encouraged to go! go! go! and share the Word with others not just in actions, but in songs and skits, in words and relationships. As each youth deals with his or her own personal challenges and hopes, the change that the Spirit is working in them leads them to answer and reflect on their own growth in Jesus. And soon, they will return home with a new understanding of what it means to live as a Servant.

Play Segment Five: The Change (Running Time: 10:39).

### DISCUSSION PART TWO

At the beginning of the segment, the devotion leader asks, "What are we to do with all of the gifts of God?" What is your response to this question?

As the youth head for the human care event, members of the youth group take turns encouraging the whole group and the youth leader makes a point to encourage them as well. While we know that our strength in such situations comes from the God, at times He chooses to surround us with people to provide us "pep" talks in faith. What words might you use to encourage your peers to resonate Jesus Christ in a similar situation?

The youth leader says, "Remember, we are all called to be a servant. We are also called to servanthood." Understanding the difference between these two words is key to understanding the change that happens on a Servant Event. What is the difference? How have the youth on this trip come to understand and live out the difference? (Leader: Help youth to recognize that being a servant often implies doing good for others. Servanthood gets at the heart of relationship and connects to the call

before Christians to be more than "do gooders" but to care for others and invest time, nurture, and witness (human care) in others.)

Consider the expectations that the youth carried into the human care experience:

Dustin: "At first I was really hesitant to go in there and talk to adults that I didn't think cared what we had to say."

Kelsey: "I was expecting a couple people not really paying attention or caring."

Amanda: "It might be weird to have kids come in and be like, 'hey, Jesus saves.'"

Gatzke: "I didn't know whether they were Christian or they weren't, or whether they would want to hear it."

What would have been some of your expectations if going into a similar "unknown" situation?

How did the youths' expectations compare with what really happened?

How have you seen the youth change and grow over the course of the Event? What challenges do you think face them as they return home?

Gatzke says, "I really don't want this to end," and Amanda, who earlier shared she didn't want to leave says, "I'm sad that we're leaving because this is the kind of place where you feel safe and everything feels good around here. But I kind of want to go home." With which perspective do you most identify? Explain.

The campfire devotion leader shares, "Don't be afraid, God has done mighty things in you." and over the week, the youth have definitely been involved in a real-life lesson. In spite of their expressed fears and the "nets" of sin they cast over their lives, God used them. What types of learnings/new applications do you think each youth will carry away from this week-long lesson?

**CLOSE** in prayer





# FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

## DAY SIX: THE RETURN

The segment begins with another youth grouper sharing, “And getting down, that’s gonna be pretty tough.” For the group, it is time to begin the return journey back to “real life.” The youth reflect on what the Servant Event has meant for their spiritual growth. They share their hopes for their faith life at home. They express a genuine desire to return home to “put their faith to work.” They leave us with a final encouragement to consider taking a Servant Event journey of our own, by Christ’s guiding.

### OPENING ACTIVITY *To the Top*

Recommended # of People: 10 and over

Safety Factor: Moderate

Materials Required: a two-by-four for each pair (boards should be about three feet long), Bibles, Gym Mats (optional)

Recommended Setting: Any

Purpose: Community Builder

Instructions: Explain to participants that they are each going to get a turn climbing as high as they want to, using only the two-by-fours and their fellow group members. Ask the group how they think they might accomplish this task and what things might be important as they work on this task.

Have participants form pairs. Have the partners face each other. Line participants up shoulder-to-shoulder in two lines. Give each pair a two-by-four, and ask students to hold each end. Have partners stand so that they are holding the boards horizontally.

Explain that one volunteer will climb up the boards as the other group members hold the boards. The first pair will hold its board close to the floor so the climber can step up on it. The next pair can hold its board a little higher and so on. Explain that the students and the boards will easily hold the climber’s weight. Ask a volunteer to begin as the first climber. As the climber clears a “rung”, have the pair holding that rung move to the other end of the line and hold their board up to continue making the “ladder”.

Allow the volunteer to climb as high as he or she would like (or as high as the group members’ arms will reach). Help the volunteer down and ask for other volunteers. Continue until everyone who is interested in climbing has the chance. Be very sensitive to participants who don’t want to do this activity. Some may believe they are too heavy for others to support them. As participants climb, notice what group members say to each other and to the climber.

When everyone has finished, ASK:

1. What was it like to climb the ladder?
2. What was it like to hold the rungs for others as they climbed during this activity?
3. What role did encouragement play as you did this activity? If group members didn’t encourage you, what difference might it have made if they had?
4. How do the rungs of the ladder represent encouragement for others?
5. How do you think the youth in the video have been like the rungs of the ladder for one another? How important will their encouragement and community be as they return home? Explain.

*From the 2006 LCMS Servant Event Bible Study, The Servant Extreme.*

## DISCUSSION PART ONE

What does it mean to have a mountain-top experience?

Describe a mountain-top experience from your life (or a family member/friend’s)? How do mountain-top experiences change us?

Would you consider paying money to perform grueling, manual labor as being a potential “high point” for a typical teenager’s summer? Why or why not?

With which youth have you most clearly connected/identified as you have watched this video? How have you seen them grow and change?

## SEGMENT SIX: THE RETURN

Leader (set-up the clip): It’s time for the youth to return home. In many ways, their expectations for this journey were met. They had fun, hung out with their friends, and experienced spiritual growth. But in more ways than one, their expectations were altered. Let’s connect with them one last time as they prepare to take what they have learned on the mountaintop back to their homes.

Play Segment Six: The Return (Running Time: 8:24)

## DISCUSSION PART TWO

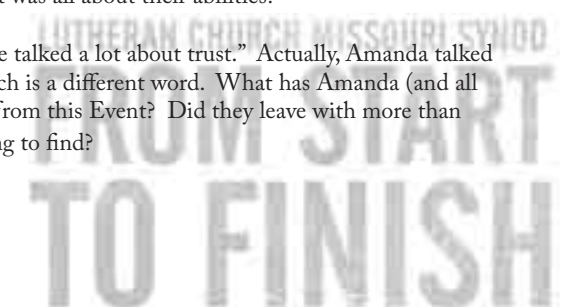
Explain how the opening quote by the youth group member, “And getting down, that’s gonna be pretty tough,” sets the tone for this final segment. Whether you experience a Servant Event in the mountains, or in an urban setting, or overseas, such an experience can be very different from life “back home.” What challenges do the youth share that wait for them back “down the mountain”? With which of the challenges can you closely identify?

(Leader: Chris shares that he won’t see most of the people he has been in community with over the week. He also shares that the group has been in the Word every “morning and every night and I hope that’s something I can keep up.” Kelsey shares that she knows she gets, “lazy sometimes, but I’m gonna try to focus on God every single day, every chance I get, just like here.” Gatzke shares, “It’s easy to talk about your faith when you’re with people that believe the same thing as you; it’s a whole other story when you go back into the world.” And Amanda says, “Up here, there’s nothing else to distract you and back home everything’s so busy.”)

The youth have set high challenges for their lives’ back home. They also recognize that it is the Holy Spirit that guides their walk and gives them strength. Gatzke says, “The Holy Spirit has worked through me. He gives me strength and draws me closer to God.” Dustin shares, “Hopefully, the Holy Spirit can work through me to have an environment like we had here on the mountaintop back home.” Why is it important that the youth come to understand that it isn’t their own abilities or strength that will help them meet these “back-home” challenges? How different would the experience (and its lasting impact) be if the youth left the mountain thinking it was all about their abilities?

Amanda says, “We’ve talked a lot about trust.” Actually, Amanda talked about DOUBT, which is a different word. What has Amanda (and all of the youth) taken from this Event? Did they leave with more than they arrived expecting to find?

**CLOSE** in prayer





# FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

## FOR ADULT LEADERS - HELPFUL TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL GROUP FACILITATION

### SIZE

Depending on the purpose for which you are using this video series, and the setting in which you are viewing the material, you may choose to work with your group as a whole, or break them into smaller discussion groups of 4-8 individuals. Adult leaders may opt to keep these small groups the same from session to session, or may choose to switch the groups up to facilitate new ideas being shared. You know your group best. Select a group style that best fits the particular youth engaging in this particular activity.

### SEATING

Sit in a circle. Not ovals or oblongs where communication can be stifled and allows people to hide. Be on the same level in the small group. Either all on chairs or all on the floor or ground.

### Q & A TIPS

Avoid yes or no questions. Always follow-up with an “explain” question. As much as possible, encourage youth to cite examples to beef-up their explanations.

Try to avoid questions that begin with “Is there...?”, “Are they...?” or “Do you think...?” Instead ask more who, what, where, when, how, and why questions.

For starters, run your questions by a friend before your small-group meeting and see if they’re dead-end yes-or-no questions, or if they provoke exploration, opinions, and discussion.

Don’t ask questions that assume an answer. Asking “How does Jesus show his anger in this passage,” assumes that a) Jesus is angry, and b) there is a right answer you want your kids to discover. The problem with such questions is that they tell students too much without leaving students room to discover answers and insights themselves. A different question would be: “What is Jesus expressing or demonstrating in this passage? Why do you think he feels this way?” Be ready for a much more interesting discussion!

Adapt questions to be tailor-made for your group’s experience. Spend some time thinking over the lesson as it pertains to where your kids are, what their maturity level is, and what specific elements of the study are particularly relevant to your students. Thoughtfully write out your questions. For instance: doing a Bible study on David and Bathsheba, don’t ask, “What effect do you think David’s sin of adultery had on his life?” Such a question is not nearly as relevant to kids as, “What could David have done to keep from giving in to his lust for Bathsheba?” Or How might such a sin impact a person’s life? Kids are more apt to talk if questions clearly reflect issues in their own lives — and what they learn from the ensuing discussions often hold more value in their daily walk.

*From the 2006 LCMS Servant Event Bible Study, The Servant Extreme.*

## STARTING A DISCUSSION & KEEPING IT GOING

Consider these 10 tips for creating a comfortable-group atmosphere in any setting, including a devotional or Bible-centered study setting.

**1. Encourage your students to verbalize their views and feelings, however unorthodox those thoughts may be. Don’t be personally “threatened” by their questions. Be a source for Truth.**

Adolescents question and nothing stifles a discussion faster than youth determining it is unsafe to say what they feel. Your group should be place where adolescents can be honest about what they’re thinking and feeling — no matter what’s on their mind. What students discover in nurturing environments remains with them far longer when they are involved in the discovery. Be slow to correct them, but, instead, let them think through their own responses. This is usually a better way for them to make genuine and lasting discoveries.

**2. Be grateful for every answer. Yes, every answer.**

Poor discussion leaders often stifle discussion by inadvertently making students feel silly or dumb about their responses and comments. Your job is to create a safe place for youth to contribute — and be appreciated for it. Sure, if you work with seventh grade males, you’ll need to gently (and sometimes forcefully) redirect the tangents that pop up every three minutes. But it’s generally better to encourage freedom in speech. Your kids will trust you (and themselves) more.

**3. Don’t be satisfied with the first response to your question. Avoid setting a question-answer-question-answer pattern.**

Here’s a better way to start a discussion. Ask for several responses to your question, then provoke the speakers to dialogue with each other. That is, move them from merely answering toward discussing or conversing — with each other, not just with you. Start the ball rolling in this direction by asking, “Why do you think that?” and “What do the rest of you think?”

**4. Keep the discussion moving.**

A study that does not move along at a good pace tends to grow tiresome. Notice when kids are starting to lose interest, then move on to the next question. If you must choose your evils, choose frustrated students who wanted to spend more time resolving an issue — not bored students who have been gradually distancing themselves from the 30-minute discussion between you and one other student. Jesus, you remember, often left questions unanswered. It helps people think for themselves.

**5. Be aware of what’s going on with individual youth as they come to your group and be prepared for how your individual youth tend to operate in groups.**

In fact, you may want to reserve the first few minutes of your small group for small talk and sharing. During your study, notice when a student begins speaking, but stops. Look beyond those who are monopolizing the discussion, and deliberately ask other, quieter students for their responses. You’ll never stop some personalities from standing out in your group; others will insist on staying in the background. That’s okay. Your goal is to make every student feel that he or she is an important member of your group, whether or not that person contributes a lot to the discussion.



## FROM START TO FINISH: DISCUSSION GUIDE

### **6. Do not fear silence.**

If your question does not elicit an immediate response from a student, don't feel you have to jump in and answer it yourself. Let the question linger in the air for a while. And let kids know this is your approach, too. In fact, silence is often an answer in itself — or can be a necessary prelude to a deeply felt response. Of course, if every question you ask is met with prolonged silence, you may need to take a hard look at the kinds of questions you're asking. Also, sometimes it is a good idea to have youth share with a partner or small cluster and then move toward sharing with the whole group. They have the opportunity to “test drive” their responses with a few peers before being brave with the whole.

### **7. Turn difficult questions back to the group.**

If you're intimidated by a student with a tough question, join the crowd. Yet that very question, tough as it may be, can provide the chance to begin a lively discussion. Don't think you have to be the expert; try turning the question back to the group instead: “Whoa, good question. What do the rest of you think?” You may get some wild answers, but the students will be encouraged to think for themselves rather than look to you for answers. If a question remains unresolved, now and then challenge your small group to find the answer by your next meeting. (A prize can add some motivation here.) And remember, in the context of a Bible study or devotion, the Word is the final ... word. Be prepared to direct students to it for direction.

### **8. Teach the group to self-correct its tangents.**

The technique of turning a question back to the group is also a remedy for wild tangents. Don't just tell the student that he or she is wrong — ask instead, “What do the rest of you think?” Chances are as students give their input, the group will correct itself. This also encourages your students to dialogue with each other instead of directing their dialogue toward you.

### **9. Remain flexible to the group's needs.**

Sooner or later (usually sooner), a student will come to a meeting with a specific, significant, and often immediate concern that needs to be addressed in the context of the group. It may be an unresolved conflict between group members, a friend who wants to know more about Christ, a recent death, an impending divorce. Now is the time to put aside your agenda and deal with the issue. This shouldn't happen every week, however. Leading a group requires the judgment to decide when an issue is sufficiently critical that it requires attention instead of glossing over.

### **10. Be prepared to learn from your group.**

This is often the best part of leading a group. Your weekly preparation, as well as the students' feedback, can profoundly influence your own spiritual development. Ministry breeds maturity, and your ministry as a group leader will nurture your spiritual life as well as the spiritual lives of your students.

*From the 2006 LCMS Servant Event Bible Study, The Servant Extreme.*

LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD  
FROM START  
TO FINISH