



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Session 8: Serving

Suggested Week of Use: July 21, 2024

Core Passage: Acts 6:1-15

News Story Summary

What makes individuals willing to serve? How do they determine how much effort they will exert when helping others? Researchers can answer those questions, at least neurologically.

In late May, scientists released a study indicating that one specific area of the brain called the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) plays a major role in the decision to help others. For the experiment, scientists enlisted three groups of participants: twenty-five patients who had experienced damage to the vmPFC, fifteen people who had experienced damage in other parts of the brain, and forty people with no damage to the brain.

Participants with vmPFC damage were less willing to help others who were suffering and exerted less effort even when they decided to help. Scientists hope to use these findings to develop new treatments for people with clinical disorders that affect empathy and other “pro-social” behaviors. They also hope this information can educate family members about why their loved one acts in anti-social ways.

For more about this story, search “vmPFC brain study and helping others.”

Engage

To supplement the Engage activities, give each adult a piece of paper and pen. Instruct the group to reflect on the past week and to write down specific ways that someone served them.

(Examples: Opened a door, cooked a meal, listened, prayed, and so forth) After several minutes, allow adults to share their responses. Ask: *How did being served affect you?*

Share the information about how a certain portion of the brain affects our service to others. Ask: *What kind of people are you most likely to serve? (Examples: Friend, stranger, colleague, church member, and so forth)* *How do you decide how much effort you are willing to give to do for them?* Explain that this session explores a passage about serving others. Emphasize that this choice had little to do with the people’s brains. Say: *It had everything to do with their hearts and their relationship with Jesus.*

Challenge

To supplement the Challenge activities, recall the vmPFC brain study. Ask: *Looking back over today’s lesson, how did serving others affect the early church’s mission for the kingdom of God?* Direct adults to turn their papers over. Instruct them to look at their week ahead and to list ways

they can serve others. Talk about how those actions might help point people toward God's kingdom. Encourage them to ask God to use their service for His glory. If time allows, discuss options for a group ministry project to put this session into practice. Close in prayer.