

# The “Prepare, Serve, Debrief” Cycle of Lessons

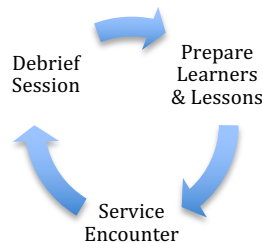
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It has been proven that serving others is the most effective way to grow spiritually. It has also been proven that the most effective way to learn is by doing. Experience is the best teacher!

If we combine both of these proven techniques, we create a learning process that is almost guaranteed to produce amazing, life-changing “fruit.” This combined process includes a “prepare, serve, debrief” teaching cycle.



**LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:** This “Prepare, Serve, Debrief Cycle” can be accomplished on the church campus, or it can be accomplished through a service project off the church campus. Whether your service component is off or on campus, you will still need to communicate thoroughly with your supervisor beforehand. The parents also need to know where their children will be during the service if they need to check their children out before the end of the service. If the service is an off-campus experience, you need to acquire the parent permission and signatures on the “Event Permission” and “Emergency Release” forms. If the children will be transported to the off-campus site by their own parents, you don’t need the transportation release forms; if you are using an outsourced bus leasing company to transport the children, you need to acquire parent signatures on an insurance form in addition to an “Emergency Release” form. It is extremely risky to permit parents to transport other children in their own vehicles. Check all of the legal form requirements with your supervisor, the church attorney and your church insurance agent.



## Prepare

1. Plan for / schedule the service project for this cycle (make necessary arrangements, fill out necessary applications, etc.).
2. Present the “big picture” of the cycle to the learners. Give them the date of the service project, and an overview of the information that needs to be learned beforehand.
3. Begin the process of teaching the learners the necessary information related to the service project. It may take several class sessions to accomplish this training/preparation.
  - a. The types of people who will be encountered.
  - b. The needs of the people who will be encountered.
  - c. Being prepared for the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges related to the project.
  - d. Specific scriptural principles or foundations related to the challenges of the project.
  - e. Specific warnings (if applicable).
4. If you are planning to conduct a service project on the church campus, you may only need to communicate with the parents and your supervisor about the plan and where the children will be.
5. If you are planning to conduct a service project that is off the church campus, you need to complete the necessary legal forms for transportation, emergency care, or parental permission (see above).
6. It is always a good idea to invite the parents to join you in the service project. There may be “pros” and “cons” to the parents’ presence, so consider this carefully.

## Serve

1. Conduct the service project. This may be a large group, small group, or individual experience. All three options have significant potential.
2. As the supervisor, monitor, encourage, and support the children as they serve.
3. Make sure the children have all the supplies they need to successfully carry out the service project.
4. During the project, roam around and compliment the children on their service. “Season” the experience with reminders of the purpose for the experience, the value of sacrifice, and the joy of serving others.
5. At the end of the service project, remind the children that you will conduct a “debriefing” of their experiences at the next class session. Encourage them to come prepared to share their stories!
6. To add some special “spice” to the upcoming “debrief” session, film the children “in action” at the service project and show the video at the “debrief” session.



## Debrief

1. Bring some “goodies” (sweet rolls, cookies, milk, drinks, pie, etc.) to the debrief session. This needs to be an enjoyable, memorable experience!
2. On the room wall, whiteboard, or video screen write the statement, “We Did It!” This is a great visual reminder of the success and joy of serving together!
3. Enjoy the “goodies” as you show the video of the service project (if you filmed it), or as you hear stories of the event.
4. Encourage the children to share their stories of the service project. Don’t make this too “regimented,” just let them talk. As the leader, you want to make sure that there is learning taking place, so you need to “guide” the conversations toward the deep learning that took place.
5. As the children share their stories, reward, and celebrate the children’s willingness to sacrifice themselves for the needs of others. Make this session “full” of celebrations of all the children as they share their stories. Don’t leave anyone out!
6. At the end of the session, summarize their experiences and highlight the learning that took place.
7. Introduce the next cycle and the next service project! Get them excited about doing this again!

