

Sunday School Lesson: Labor for Love

Based on Ephesians 2:8–10

Designed for Middle and High School Students

Length: 25–30 Minutes

Overview — 2 Minutes

Today's lesson focuses on an important truth: We are not saved because we do good things. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus. Once we are saved, however, God gives us opportunities to do good works that show His love to others.

Students do not have to wait until they are adults to serve God. He can use them right now—in their schools, homes, friendships, teams, churches, and online interactions.

Opening Question — 3 Minutes

Ask:

- Have you ever helped someone without being asked or expecting anything in return?
- How did it make you feel?
- Why can it be disappointing when no one notices the good things we do?

Explain that serving God is not about receiving attention, praise, or rewards. It is about allowing God's love to work through us.

Key Scripture — 3 Minutes

Read **Ephesians 2:8–10** together.

Ask students to listen for answers to these three questions:

1. How are we saved?
2. What does not save us?
3. What did God create us to do?

Emphasize:

- We are saved by grace through faith.
 - Salvation is God’s gift, not something we earn.
 - We are God’s workmanship, created to do good works He has prepared for us.
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Key Takeaways — 7 Minutes

1. Grace Comes Before Good Works

Doing good things cannot earn salvation. Salvation is a gift from God that we receive by trusting in Jesus.

We do not serve so that God will love us. We serve because He already loves us.

Youth example: Attending church, being kind, following rules, or helping others are all good things, but none of them can replace a personal relationship with Jesus.

2. There Is No Room for Bragging

Since salvation is God’s gift, no one can brag about earning it. Our abilities and opportunities to serve also come from Him.

Youth example: It is easy to want attention for making the highest grade, scoring the winning point, singing a solo, or helping at church. Humility means using those opportunities to honor God instead of trying to prove that we are better than others.

3. Your Everyday Life Is Your Mission Field

Students do not have to travel far away or lead a major ministry to serve God. God can use ordinary choices to make His love visible.

This might include:

- Sitting with someone who is alone
- Defending someone who is being mistreated
- Helping at home without complaining
- Encouraging a struggling friend
- Refusing to join in gossip
- Using social media in a kind and Christlike way
- Welcoming a new student or church visitor

4. God Has Work for You to Do Now

God has already prepared opportunities for each believer to serve Him. We may not know His entire plan, but we can stay ready and obey Him one step at a time.

Being young does not disqualify anyone from being used by God.

5. Your Gifts and Burdens Can Point Toward Your Purpose

A **gift** is something God has equipped you to do. A **burden** is a person, problem, or need you deeply care about.

Your gifting + your burden may reveal a place where God wants to use you.

Examples:

- Loves art + cares about lonely people = creating encouraging cards
 - Enjoys sports + cares about younger children = helping coach or mentor
 - Good listener + cares about hurting friends = offering encouragement and prayer
 - Understands technology + wants to help the church = serving with media or worship technology
 - Loves music + wants others to know Jesus = using music to worship and encourage
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Discussion Questions — 8 Minutes

Choose four or five questions based on the group's participation.

1. Why do people sometimes believe they must earn God's love?
 2. What is the difference between doing something good to receive attention and doing it for God's glory?
 3. Where is it hardest for you to act like a follower of Jesus—at school, at home, with friends, on a team, or online? Why?
 4. What is one good work a middle or high school student can do that adults sometimes overlook?
 5. Have you ever avoided helping because you were afraid of what your friends might think?
 6. What is one ability or gift God has given you?
 7. What type of person or problem do you especially care about?
 8. How could God use that gift and burden together?
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Practical Application — 4 Minutes

This Week's Challenge: Notice, Act, and Give God the Glory

Ask each student to choose one place where they will intentionally serve God this week:

- **At school:** Encourage or include someone who feels left out.
- **At home:** Complete a helpful task without being asked or praised.
- **With friends:** Refuse to gossip and speak positively about someone.
- **Online:** Post, share, or comment in a way that reflects Christ.
- **At church:** Find one way to serve instead of waiting to be served.
- **In the community:** Help meet a need through kindness, generosity, or volunteering.

Have students complete this sentence:

“This week, I will show God's love by _____.”

Remind them that the goal is not to receive recognition. The goal is to help someone see the love of Jesus.

Closing Reflection and Prayer — 3 Minutes

Remind students:

You are not saved by doing good works. You are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus. But once you belong to Him, He wants to work through you. You do not have to wait until you are older, more talented, or more confident. God has placed you where you are for a purpose.

Ask:

What good work might God already have prepared for you this week—and are you willing to walk in it?

Close in prayer:

“God, thank You for saving us by grace and not because of anything we have earned. Help us recognize the gifts You have given us and the needs You have placed on our hearts. Show us opportunities to serve You at school, at home, at church, and with our friends. Keep us humble, willing, and ready to do the good works You have prepared for us. May everything, we do point others toward Jesus. Amen.”