

Ministering to Those in Need

Background Scripture: Luke 4 • Print Passage: Luke 4:14-22a

KEY VERSES: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19)



Davina is a student ambassador for Cleveland Middle School. Davina as well as eleven other ambassadors are to promote a positive image of the school on campus and throughout the community. One of the main things the principal wants the ambassadors to concentrate on is building unity throughout the student population, so that every student feels valued and connected to the school in a meaningful way. Each ambassador serves as a spokesperson for a particular group of students, such as athletes, band members, chorus members, content area clubs (like the science club), new students, and students interested in agriculture. The ambassadors are responsible for talking with their assigned group of students to find out if they have any problems, concerns, or ideas that should be discussed with teachers and administrators to keep their school moving in a positive direction.

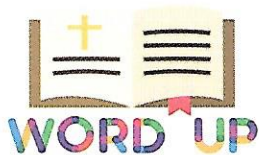
Davina was on her way to the next ambassadors meeting when she saw a student named Jamal being teased



by a small group of students. Jamal, a seventh-grade student, has autism. Characteristic of students on the autism spectrum, Jamal sometimes has great difficulty communicating effectively and socially interacting with other students. Because of his condition, some students like to tease Jamal and get him to do inappropriate things just for laughs. Davina was able to move Jamal away from the teasing incident. Reflecting on the situation, Davina realized that students with special needs were not being properly represented at her school. She could

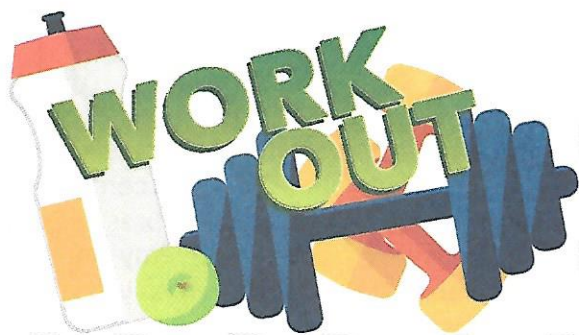
help those students feel connected and valued. This meant taking on more work, but Davina’s encounter with Jamal gave her the confidence to know that she could make a difference.

When Davina arrived at the meeting, she shared her experience with Jamal and volunteered to be the ambassador for students with special needs. To her delight, everyone supported her idea. Even greater, the group decided to extend an invitation to Jamal to become one of the school’s ambassadors.



Luke 4:14-22a

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. 16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” 20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” 22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.



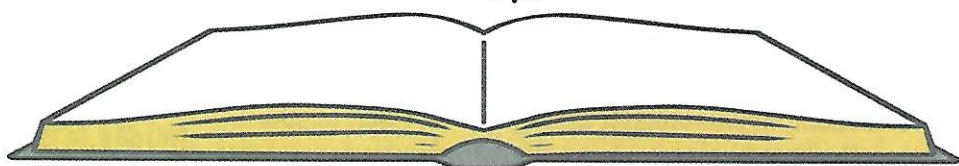
In today's Scripture passage, Jesus is starting His ministry in Galilee. Jesus spoke with the power of the Holy Spirit. All who heard Him were drawn into His teachings and were amazed at His knowledge regarding God's Word. During this time of ministry, Jesus stopped in Nazareth, which was the village where He was raised. Doing what He always did when He lived there, Jesus went to the synagogue. A *synagogue* is a Jewish place of worship on the Sabbath, and it also was used as a school. During ancient times, only boys were allowed to go to school at the synagogue. Jesus regularly attended the synagogue, so He

knew quite well what happened there. Jesus was invited to read from the scroll. The passage Jesus read was written by the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah prophesied in the Old Testament about Jesus' coming.

Jesus intentionally selected a special part of the Scripture to read. The passage Jesus read emphasized how the Good News would be preached and that captives would be set free. To all who were listening, Jesus proclaimed that He was the one who would spread the Gospel and set the captives free. The listeners were puzzled because they only knew Jesus as Joseph's son, not as the Son of God. They could not comprehend Him as such, nor as the Messiah that was prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus was not accepted by His own people, yet He stayed faithful to His calling and did God's will.

INSIDE OUT

Jesus revealed Himself in the synagogue as the one to whom Isaiah was referring in his Old Testament prophecy. Although Jesus lived and grew up around the Jewish religious leaders of Nazareth, they did not recognize that He was the awaited Messiah. The synagogue listeners were amazed at His teaching, yet puzzled because He was merely "Joseph's son." Some ignore God's power because of who it comes through. When you open your heart and invite Jesus in, He knows just how to get your attention.



There's an App for That!

In this world that has so many influences, it is easy to lose focus on the things of God. Believers must be intentional about keeping their focus on Jesus. When our thoughts, ambitions, goals, and life plans are put in God's hands, He can make unimaginable things happen for our good. In today's Key Verses, Jesus proclaimed that He came to bring freedom to the people. This freedom empowers believers to defeat sin and live a victorious life in harmony with God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Will you trust Jesus to lead you to a life of bountiful blessings?



Walk Out

Even though Jesus was the perfect Son of God, He knew the importance of going to the synagogue to pray when He arrived in Nazareth. Jesus models the importance of our going to church. Be like Jesus and set aside time for worship regularly by attending Sunday school, Bible study, worship services, and other faith-based activities at your church.



STEPPING OUT

Like Jesus, believers should be interested in the condition of people's souls. This week, you are challenged to look around your school and community. Will you find people who appear to be lonely, depressed, or oppressed due to difficult life circumstances or mistreatment from others? Pray and ask God to show you how to make a difference in the lives of youth who need encouragement. Commit to pray for those people every day this week.



It's Game Time!

Think of a time when you or someone you know was bullied. In the space below, list ways that you can assist others who are being bullied or mistreated due to their appearance, disability, social and economic status, or ethnicity. Discuss your list with the class and vow to be an agent of peace.

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Media Mission



Believers should be willing to rally around causes that protect the rights of others. Visit the Web site <http://startguide.org/orgs/orgs06.html> to find a list of social-justice organizations. Browse the site and choose one or two organizations to learn more about. Consider volunteering at an organization that supports social-justice campaigns for people in your community.

