

The Nurse Who Went Above and Beyond— Showing Radical Generosity and Love

This lesson can be presented over 1-2 sessions. Instructors should feel free to use whichever discussion questions and activities you think best for your class or group. We advise giving students the sheet with the definitions of the virtues before each session.

Lesson Goals

Help students:

- Know that sometimes we are called to do something more radical than is commonly considered to do what is right
- Be open to a higher calling, whether it's from our belief in God or another source of inspiration, that calls us to act for the good of others
- See how our empathy, compassion, generosity and love can change not only the person cared for but many others as a source of inspiration
- Know that unity of purpose enables us to cut through boundaries such as age, race and economic status to achieve true solidarity and unity with others
- Aspire toward a greater level of gratitude / thankfulness for simple yet powerful gifts such as health, a home, the support of others and especially family

Primary Virtues / Character Traits

Caring: to help others; a caring person lives with empathy in trying to understand another person's situation, compassion in desiring to help others, and with generosity in acting to help

Empathy: trying to understand another person's situation, entering into the feeling or spirit of others and imagining yourself in another person's situation.

Compassion: Feeling of sympathy for the distress of others, with the desire to help

Generosity and Love: to freely give of ourselves with possessions, time and / or talent for the betterment of another person, without expecting anything in return

Secondary Virtues / Character Traits

Solidarity: unity from a shared common purpose and / or interest; active loyalty within a group; mutual support within a group; being present with others

Family Dedication / Support: complete dedication for the well-being of other members of our family, physically, emotionally and spiritually, motivated by love

Gratitude: showing appreciation for kindness and returning kindness; being thankful for all of the good things like family, friends and others who support us and care for us, health, home, opportunity and freedom.

Leader Introduction

Can you imagine inviting someone who you met just three days ago to move into your house with you? That's exactly what Lori Wood, a nurse at a hospital in Atlanta, did for one of her homeless patients who needed a heart transplant. Let's watch her and her patient's amazing story of radical care and love.

Video Clip:

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/embed/video/2039158.html>

Leader Summary

Lori now comes home from work everyday to find Jonathan waving and smiling at her from the porch saying, “Hey Mama!” and wanting a hug. Some aspects of their story not covered in this video are Lori drives Jonathan to his doctor appointments, makes sure that he takes all of the 34 pills needs everyday, and is even teaching him how to cook and eat meals that are healthy for his heart. Since his surgery, she is helping him to become more independent and says, “he’s welcome to stay here as long as he wants to, but I also know that he deserves to have his own life. So at some point, when he’s ready, we’re going to try to make that happen.” But even after Jonathan is able to move out and take care of himself again, he is a part of Lori’s life forever. Jonathan does not just have a new heart, but also a new family. Jonathan says, ““I feel like I’m one of her sons. All I can say is, “Thank you, Mama Lori. Thank you. I love you.””¹

Discussion Question Options *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses or bullet points if needed)*

Before beginning our discussion, let’s read over the virtues and their definitions - included within the online lesson as a separate document.

1. Lori said she felt called by God in her heart that there was no other choice other than to bring Jonathan home with her. Sometimes, when we know something is wrong we feel called to take action, and sometimes like Lori we are called to do something that we and others wouldn’t normally expect. Do you think that if you were in Lori’s situation you would have done what she did? (Encourage students to present reasons both for and against.)

Let’s give examples of when we or someone we know were called to help someone, or to work for a cause in a way that went beyond normal expectations. What was the situation and what did we or the other person do that went beyond normal expectations?

(If needed encourage students to also consider their own parents, teachers, coaches, community activists, and people in normal jobs who care beyond normal expectations.)

2. Looking at the highlighted virtues for this lesson, what are some specific examples of how Lori lived out these virtues?

(**empathy**—understanding that Jonathan was homeless and sick through no fault of his own and how sad and scary that must be for him; **compassion**—she felt a true desire to help Jonathan; **generosity and love**—actually taking action to move Jonathan into her home, care for him during his recovery and now to prepare him for a life of independence and all while expecting nothing in return)

3. Jonathan calls Lori his “second mom.” Even though they are not actually related, what do Jonathan and Lori show us about **family dedication and support**?

After seeing this story does it change our view on how dedicated we are to our family and how we can offer support to our siblings and parents?

¹ Quotes and information from The Washington Post:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2019/11/09/nurse-adopts-homeless-man-she-just-met-so-he-can-get-heart-transplant/>

4. At first glance, Lori and Jonathan couldn't look any more different. They are different ages, races, genders, and make much different incomes yet they have come together to form a new family. What virtue does their story of coming together exemplify and how?

(**Solidarity** in that they become united in their mutual goal of restoring Jonathan's health, and the simple yet powerful desire to help others and to do the right thing)

How can we live out **solidarity** in our everyday lives? – **also a team activity below**

(Knowing that people have more in common than what makes us different, greet and smile as you encounter others; make a point of getting to know someone who is very different from you; offer what you can to help those who are less fortunate; when in a disagreement with others strive to also discuss what common goals you have that relate to the topic you are disagreeing about; when in a disagreement with others strive to not make it personal by cutting down or demeaning the other person; show love for your neighbors and the people in your community.)

5. Jonathan has autism and heart failure and after his grandmother, who he lived with, passed away Jonathan did not have anywhere to live or family that could care for him. What difficulties do you think Jonathan and other people face while being homeless?
(Lack of medical care and medicine; being hungry and lack of access to healthy food; having a hard time finding a job; difficulty in dressing well for work and getting to work; inability to care for children)

What virtues can we practice to help people who suffer from homelessness?

(Practice **empathy** in striving to understand how they got into that situation and how that must make them feel. **Generosity** by donating our time, money, food, or even homes to those who go without)

6. **Also a journal writing option below.** After seeing and thinking about Jonathan's story are there things in our life that we should be more thankful for and possibly before took for granted?

Journal Writing Options

1. One of Lori's bosses said, "Because of her and what she's done, we all want to become better people and caregivers." Write about a time that someone inspired you to be more **caring** through his/her own example.
2. **Family dedication and support** can help people get through difficult times in their lives. Write about a time you supported a member of your family. How did you help them? What impact do you think your support had on them?
3. After seeing and thinking about Jonathan's story write about some things in your life that you previously took for granted and now will appreciate more.

Extended Activities:

1. Organize students into teams of 3-5 students. Have students discuss what **gratitude** is and what it looks like when we see **gratitude**. Students will come up with a list of people that they are grateful for and specific actions for showing gratitude to those people. Encourage students to think not only about people they see regularly (like family members, teachers, coaches, friends or neighbors) but also the unseen or previously unnoticed helpers in their lives (like cafeteria workers, janitors, nurses, doctors, law enforcement, soldiers and veterans). Each team should then share its recommended acts of gratitude with the group as a whole.
2. Organize students into teams of 3-5 students. Each team should come up with specific recommendations on how we can strive for greater **solidarity** in our everyday lives. (Encourage students to discuss and then recommend ways they can cut across boundaries and build unity with others who are different from them, how they can better handle disagreements with others and how to focus on goals that can unify us within our school and larger communities.) Each team should then share its recommended strategies for solidarity with the group as a whole.

You can also ask each team to create a skit that shows a heated disagreement over a political issue, or another current issue in your community, where there are strongly held beliefs on both sides. As the disagreement starts to heat up have a different person step in and ask both sides to state what their goal is for the position they are advocating and what values those goals reflect such as respect for others and equal opportunity. Most likely both sides have the same goals and values and disagree on how to achieve them.

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