



A Life of Service

Learning Targets/Objectives:

- Demonstrate an understanding of Dr. King's service as a minister and Civil Rights leader.
- Identify 2-4 of Dr. King's major contributions to the Civil Rights Movement.

Success Criteria

- Determine the most significant impact of King's commitment to service.

Lesson Content Overview:

Upon completing his studies at Boston University, King officially accepted the call to pastor at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, in May 1954. He became the full-time pastor on the first Sunday in September 1954. During his first year in Montgomery, King primarily focused on his new congregation and became involved with a few local service organizations, including the local chapter of the NAACP.

On December 1, 1955, Montgomery police arrested Rosa Parks for refusing to give up her seat in the front row of the unreserved section of the bus for a white male patron. Outraged by the continued mistreatment and subjugation of Black leaders in Montgomery launched a boycott of the city buses. The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was established and Dr. King was elected president.

The MIA provided the organizational and administrative structure of the bus boycott. On December 5, 1955 at the mass meeting held at the Holt Street Baptist Church, King gave, in his words, "the most decisive speech" of his life. This moment marked the beginning of the process of love-in-action through nonviolent civil disobedience. He led the MIA through the Montgomery Bus Boycott which lasted 382 days. The boycott ended on December 20, 1956.

King pastored at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church from September 1954 to November 1959. After his resignation, King moved with his family to Atlanta to direct the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) activities as its founder and president from 1960 to his death in 1968. In Atlanta, he also co-pastored with his father at Ebenezer Baptist Church, and served as Vice President of the National Sunday School and Baptist Teaching Union Congress of the National Baptist Convention. He was a member of several national and local boards of directors and served on the board of trustees of numerous institutions and agencies. King was elected to membership in several learned societies, including the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Dr. King dedicated his life to using nonviolent resistance to help integrate public accommodations, which included restaurants, hotels, buses, and, among other public facilities, schools. His activism included marches, sit-ins, freedom rides, and boycotts. Though arrested 30 times for his participation in civil rights activities, King was instrumental in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

King delivered numerous speeches and sermons during his lifetime and received several hundred awards for his leadership in the Civil Rights Movement. King won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. At a ceremony in Norway, he received a medal and a \$54,000 cash award, which King donated to various African American organizations.



Although many people only associate King with his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, he was an extensive and prolific writer, a powerful preacher, and a modern-day philosopher whose truths rang true in the twenty-first century. In his 13 years of social justice activism, King wrote six books, delivered thousands of sermons and speeches, and found time to develop the philosophy of nonviolence and reconciliation as a means for social change. King’s books include the following:

Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1958

In this book, Dr. King wrote about the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This book gives a step-by-step account of the boycott. It was Dr. King's first book.

The Measure of a Man. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1959.

The book consists of two notable devotional addresses, What is Man? and The Dimensions of a Complete Life.

Strength to Love. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, June 1963.

This is a collection of classic sermons preached by Dr. King. Sixteen sermons and one essay entitled "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence." In this book, Dr. King discussed such topics as: A Tough Mind and a Tender Heart, On Being A Good Neighbor; Love In Action, and many others.

Why We Can't Wait. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964

It includes the full text of the letter that Dr. King wrote from a Birmingham jail. Written in 1963, this book also includes several black and white photos of the protest marches and confrontations with the police during Civil Rights demonstrations as well as a detailed description of the Civil Rights campaign in Birmingham, Alabama.

Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community? New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967.

The introduction to the book states that this is a book about power - specifically the power of a nonviolent army of determined African Americans who have concluded that equality is not given, but taken, and nothing but relentless pressure will achieve full citizenship for Blacks in America. It is an assessment of America 's priorities and a warning that they need to be re-ordered.

The Trumpet of Conscience. Harper Collins, 1968 (published posthumously).

Foreword by Coretta Scott King, the five talks published in this book were broadcast during November and December 1967 over the Canadian Broadcast Corp as the seventh annual series of Massey Lectures. The lectures are named in honor of the late Rt. Honorable Vincent Massey, Gov. General of Canada. Dr. King addresses issues including the Vietnam War, youth and civil disobedience and concludes with the "Christmas Sermon for Peace".

Additionally, some of Dr. King's sermons include, but are not limited to the following:

- A Knock at Midnight
- Guidelines for a Constructive Church



- Loving Your Enemies
- Paul's Letter to the American
- Church Rediscovering Lost Values
- The Drum Major Instinct
- The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life
- Why Jesus Called a Man a Fool

SEL Opener:

Think about how you can help make your community better. Read the list below and choose a "Call to Action". Complete the [Service Chart](#) based on your choice.

- *Clean up a local park, lot, or pond.*
- *Start a letter to a senior citizen.*
- *Honor a local leader by creating a poster/billboard for them.*
- *Raise money for a good cause.*
- *Design and paint a mural for the outside of your school.*
- *Create a public service announcement (PSA).*
- *Build a greenhouse in your school or community.*
- *Encourage a recycling program at your school.*
- *Plant a tree or garden in your school or community.*

When completed, discuss your ideas with a partner, in small groups, or as a class.

Instructional Activities:

- Activity 1: Read *My Uncle Martin's Big Heart* by Angela Farris Watkins, Ph.D.
 - Discuss the characters, plot, feelings, vocabulary, summary, and themes.
- Activity 2: Watch and Listen to the [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Song and Rap](#)
- Activity 3: Video Stations
 - Video #1:** [PBS Rosa Parks, MLK, and Montgomery Bus Boycott](#)
 - Video #2:** ["I Have a Dream" / March on Washington](#)
 - Video #3:** [PBS Civil Rights Movement](#)



Video #4: [The Voting Rights Act of 1965](#)

Video #5: [Nobel Peace Prize](#)

Video #6: [The Assassination of King and the Events that Followed](#)

- Choose 1 key fact or lesson you learned from each video station.
- Illustrate that fact or lesson in the TVs in the [Service Chart](#).

Assessments:

- **OPTION 1:** Complete the [Dr. King's Life of Service Timeline Pictures](#) (K-2)
- **OPTION 2:** Complete the [Dr. King's Life of Service Timeline Reflection](#) (3-5)
 - Reference: [Major King Events Chronology 1929-1968](#)

Adaptations for Student Needs

IEP

- Sizes of student groups range
- Students team up with a peer partner, while others would prefer to work individually.
- There is a variety of small-group work
- Chunking information
- Visual cues and wait time
- Visual supports (maps, images, PowerPoint slides, handouts)
- Assessments will be modified, and students given extra time

ELD/ELL/ESL

- Modified/simplified reading material
- Content-related lists/handouts of key terms
- Text is supported by visuals and connected to real-life experiences