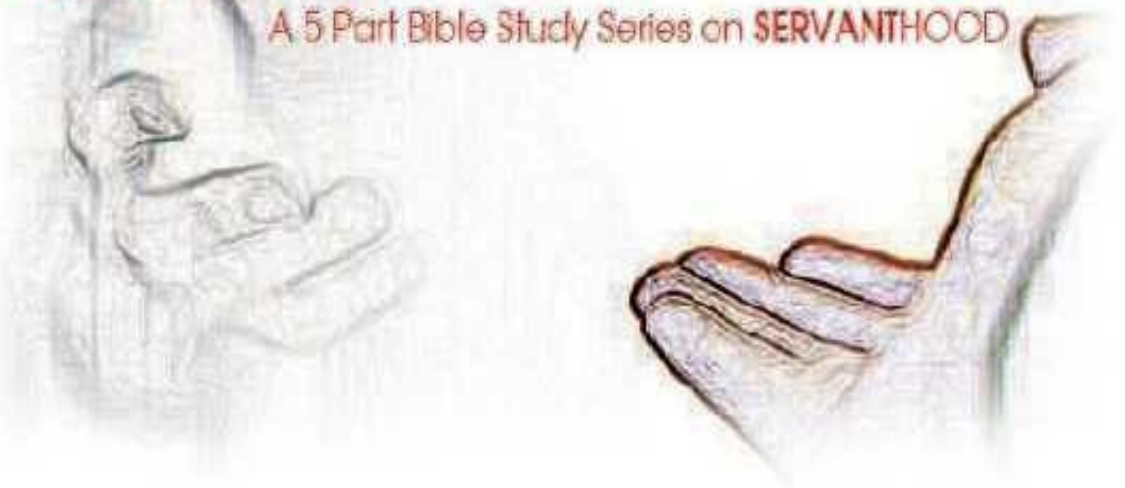


SERVANTHOOD

A 5 Part Bible Study Series on SERVANTHOOD



1. Christ the Servant
2. Serving as Leadership
3. The Christian as a Servant
4. Love, Humility, Gifting
5. Humbling and Servanthood

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CHRIST THE SERVANT

Study Overview

The Bible has a great deal to say about Servanthood because the central theme of the Bible is the Servant of all—Jesus Christ. ***“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).*** The books of Romans, Philippians, James, and 2nd Peter all begin with references to the writers being servants or bondservants of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we give Jesus Christ His rightful place as Lord of our lives, His Lordship will be expressed in the way we serve others (Mark 9:35; 1 Peter 4:10; John 15:12-13). Scripture clearly teaches that the way to true greatness is through serving Christ (John 12:26). We do that by genuinely and lovingly caring for other people. Biblical service can be defined as “a loving act performed in the power of the Holy Spirit to meet the temporal and spiritual needs of those around us”.

Christian service is different to mere humanitarian service. The Scriptures teach that God empowers our service - we can serve in His strength. Added to this, God places within the Church those who have the spiritual gift to 'serve'. By seeking God and His strength, the believer is able to do more than they otherwise could. This then becomes a powerful witness because it causes observers to wonder how it is possible. The answer of course leads to God being glorified. Thus, when a believer refuses to stretch in their serving, they are in part depriving God of glory.

In this series we will explore how serving: honours God, reflects Jesus Christ, blesses others, matures believers, evangelises and disciples. It requires humility. It requires sacrifice. It may lead to being misunderstood. It will lead to being unthanked and unappreciated. When we consider the humblest servant of all, Jesus Christ, He was despised, mocked and rejected. We can clearly see that serving costs.

CHRIST THE SERVANT

“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles... Matthew 12:18

We could have no greater example of a servant than Christ. At the most critical time of His life, Jesus exemplified the heart and action of a true servant in John 13, a few hours before His arrest and subsequent crucifixion. His whole life and ministry was in obedience to the Father in the form of Servanthood.

1. What did it take for even Jesus to become a servant?

(Philippians 2:5-8)

The above passage shows us that Christ deliberately chose to become a servant. But it cost Him. Later, we will see that Servanthood comes at a cost for us too.

2. Note Philippians 2:9-11. How did God the Father respond to Christ’s choice to become a servant?

Later in our series we will also see that the Greatest Servant of all commands His followers, all Christians, to be servants as well.

3. Read Matthew 20:26-28. What was the basis for Christ being able to command that His followers be servants?

4. Based on Mark 10:45, what was Christ’s greatest act of Servanthood?

5. Why did Christ serve people?

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6. How else did Christ serve others?

Serving others on God's behalf is enabled by the gifts and talents God gives His servants. In Christ's case, He potentially had every possible gift and talent with which to serve others. I say potentially, because Christ - without ever ceasing to be God - relinquished His power as God. His ability to serve others was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

7. Read the episode of Christ's service in John 13 from verse 5 to verse 14. Did Christ need the empowering of the Holy Spirit for this act of service?

8. Based on John 13:14, discuss whether Christ's followers need a special word or anointing from God to serve others.

This episode of Christ's service toward His disciples is a powerful illustration of our salvation and sanctification. In order for us to be spiritually clean, Christ must become our Servant and wash us. This is like our salvation. Then Christ must continue to serve us by washing our faces, hands and feet (note Exodus 30:19-21). This is why salvation is an act of God's grace- God serving us in a way we could not serve ourselves. As we shall soon see in our later studies on Servanthood, serving is an act of grace. Grace is free for the recipient, but often costly for the giver. When it comes to the salvation of a sinner, the scriptures reveal what we know intuitively: *we cannot save ourselves, we need it done for us*. Because of God's great love toward us, He sent His Servant as our Servant to be our Saviour. God served to save us. He has shown us – **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**.

9. How does Acts 3:26 claim that God wants Christ to serve and bless people?

Next Study: Serving As Leadership

SERVING AS LEADERSHIP

Study Overview

True leadership is Servanthood. The five words in the New Testament translated "ministry" generally refer to servanthood or service given in love. Serving others is the very essence of ministry. All believers are called to ministry (Matthew 28:18-20) and therefore, we are all called to be servants for the glory of God.

Servant-Leadership is largely about attitude (we'll look more closely at motive and attitude later in our studies) and a preparedness to work. In this section, we examine the teaching of Christ about leadership in which Christ established the standard of Servanthood for His leaders. But it almost sounds contradictory. How can a leader be a servant? In this study we'll see that servant-leadership involves considering the needs of others and while leading them (which involves influencing them or directing them) it also involves looking after them.

Servant-Leadership focuses on the growth and well-being of the people. They are more concerned with the spiritual maturing of the individual, and not primarily the growth and potential of the organization. That distinguishes servant leadership from other leadership styles.

While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by those at the "top of the pyramid," servant leadership is different. Servant leadership is best defined by Jesus Himself: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26-28) In the Christian realm, all leadership should be servant leadership.

SERVING AS LEADERSHIP

But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant... Mark 10:43

History reveals that whenever Christian Leadership has misused power and authority, it has resulted in a church in decline, division, general mistrust, cynicism from the public, and a loss of pure, genuine, evangelistic zeal.

1. In what way is Luke 22:26 about the attitude of Christ's followers?

2. How did Christ's statement in Luke 22:27 give Him the right to ask that His leaders become servants?

Christian leaders are to serve those they lead. But this should not be understood as "weak" leadership. Neither should it be thought of as permission to treat 'leaders' disrespectfully.

3. How can a Christian leader best serve those they lead?

4. In what ways does Hebrews 13:7 imply ways in which leaders can serve those they lead?

5. Based on Hebrews 13:17 why is it important (to say the least) that leaders serve well?

Nehemiah is a premier example of leadership in Scripture. He served the returned Jews by overseeing the reconstruction program of Jerusalem, particularly the walls. The purpose of this was the welfare and protection of the people of Jerusalem. Nehemiah used his organisational skills and worked day and night to ensure that he best directed everyone's efforts.

SERVING AS LEADERSHIP

6. Christian leadership means serving others sacrificially. In what ways did Paul the apostle lead like Nehemiah? (Note 2Cor. 6:4-5; 11:25-29)

7. Paul warned the Romans against those who claimed to be 'leaders' yet did not lead with a servant heart. Note in Romans 16:17-18 how he said these 'non-servant' "leaders" could be identified.

Christian leaders serve Christ by serving those within the Church. This is magnificently important for Christian leaders to keep in mind. Some people may not like you, or they may falsely accuse you. Your decisions may not be popular. When that happens, concentrate on maintaining a servant spirit and allow the Lord to handle the unfair criticism. We can easily become disgruntled, discouraged or even disillusioned by peoples opinion.

8. Although Paul regarded himself as a "super-apostle" (2 Cor. 11:5;12:11), ultimately, how did he think he should be regarded according to 1st Corinthians 4:1?

Servant-Leadership involves working with others. Servant-Leaders understand authority (Matt. 8:9). They understand that they are under authority, perhaps to another servant-leader, but most importantly they understand that they are under the authority of Christ. Servant-Leaders know how to use their authority correctly and biblically when leading others. If you are under authority serving a leader, you serve without "delegating up" (you don't put your responsibility back onto your leader). If you are in authority as a servant-leader you will serve by following up.

9. What did Jesus consider to be the basis for "great" leadership? (Matt. 20:25-26)

10. Why do you think many Christians struggle to exercise 'servant-leadership'? What challenges do Christian servant-leaders face?

Next Study: The Christian As A Servant

THE CHRISTIAN AS A SERVANT

Study Overview

We have established that Christ was a servant, in fact - "The Servant". We have also seen that biblical leadership is Servanthood. As followers of Christ we are to be servants like our Master (Matt. 10:25). Although the world sees promotion as moving up, Christ regarded promotion as moving down. John the Baptist once said that his goal was to decrease (John 3:30). This is completely counter to the spirit of the world which rewards arrogance, selfish ambition, and manipulated prominence. It is the goal of this study to lead your group into a commitment to serve others in the spirit of Christ. This spirit will affect the way they interact with pre-Christians, but especially with fellow believers (Gal. 6:10). When the local church assembles it is a display what sacrificial service looks like. The church is a servant organisation.

When a business grows, its managers and owners are usually promoted. But when a church grows it's ministers must be demoted - that is, they decrease by increasing their Servanthood. This reflects what John the Baptist said when Christ, the focus of his prophecies, appeared - "I must decrease and He must increase." (John 3:30)

We will explore why a Christian is a servant, why this requires humility and why this is difficult for most Christians to maintain. As the group leader your job is not just to lead your group through this Bible Study, but to also help your group members to get to know each other better with the goal of discovering how they can serve each other better.

Members of your Bible Study Group may be carrying loads, cares or burdens that they have not disclosed. As leader, you can gently reassure your group that because Christ is 'The Servant', He can serve us at the point of our secret need - whether that need be healing, forgiveness, hope or reconciliation. As you lead your group in prayer, you set the tone for the Bible Study. As you ask the study questions, your engagement with those in your group (by "active listening" that is, eye contact, verbal acknowledgement, and affirmation of a person's answer) will help your group members to have the confidence that they can share issues of their heart and thus have God minister His changing grace to them

THE CHRISTIAN AS A SERVANT

If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him... John 12:26

Imagine your family farm had struggled through drought and famine for one too many years. Your father has borrowed equipment, money and food with the promise that when things turn around, he will repay his creditors. But the harvests never came. Your family has ended up borrowing to pay the interest on the borrowings they have already made. And now the creditors demand that their accounts be settled. In Biblical times there was only one way a situation like this could be resolved. You and your family would be sold as slaves to recoup the creditors' debts. Under Biblical Law, you would have to serve for a minimum period before your debt was considered cancelled. While under servitude you would be required to do whatever your master asked, whenever your master asked, however your master asked - whether you liked it or not.

1. Read what Jesus had to say about being a servant in this context in Luke 17:7-10. How does this show us how Christ wants His followers to serve?

2. In what way is this passage not just about what a servant of Christ should do? In what ways does this teaching from Christ challenge you?

3. Discuss John 15:15 in the light of Christ's followers being His servants. What is Christ saying about the motivation of His followers as servants?

4. How do Christ's beatitudes about Christian service, particularly in Matthew 5:40-41, reveal the type of service Christ is looking for?

5. Why do you think most Christians find it hard to serve in this way?

THE CHRISTIAN AS A SERVANT

6. Sometimes we can feel that our service for God and others is not only unappreciated but pointless. In what way does Acts 13:36 reveal why our humanly unappreciated service have a higher purpose?

7. In Acts 20:18-19, Paul describes how he served the church at Ephesus. Note carefully what he has said. While there is joy and ease in serving within the church community, there can also be other experiences associated with it. What do you observe in this passage as Paul's experience and attitude in doing so?

8. Based on Romans 1:9, how else did Paul say he served the church?

9. In what way is Romans 12:11 a challenge for how we are to serve the Lord?

10. According to Romans 14:17-19, what type of service brings God's acceptance and the approval of others?

Christ's followers are called to serve within the church - to their brothers and sisters with their time, talent and treasure. We are also called by Christ to serve the world as His ambassadors. This is why our jobs hold higher meaning for us.

11. In what ways does 1st Corinthians 9:19 encourage us that our serving can be fruitful?

Serving Christ within the Church and the world may require, for some, the traits of 2nd Corinthians 6:4-10. But above all, as we serve Christ we will need the motive prescribed in Galatians 5:13.

Next Study: Love, Humility, Gifting

LOVE HUMILITY GIFTING

Study Overview

Another way of saying “Servanthood” is to say, humility. To be humble is to serve. All believers should strive to be humble. Servanthood is also one of the greatest demonstrations of love. A willingness to serve is therefore one of the hallmarks of Christian maturity.

We now live in an age of waning volunteerism. This seems to have resulted in a generation that is reluctant to serve unless there is something in it for them. To correct this we need mature examples and patient instruction from the Scriptures. The opposite end of this same spectrum is an individual or group wanting to serve but not given the opportunity to do so.

There are of course those who are gifted with Servanthood. They will often be the first to see the needs of others. Serving people is not a burden or inconvenience. How and whom they serve is not limited to preference or convenience. You will often see those with the gift of ‘serving’ cleaning toilets one day to counselling another in distress the next. There tends to be influence for the kingdom through their gift of Servanthood. More often than not, they will be the ones that are most likely unappreciated. But they are also the ones who are most able to instruct the rest of us who don’t serve naturally.

As group leader, gently observe how those in your small group react or respond to this study. It may be appropriate to ask your group how you can together cultivate the best environment for people feeling that their service is significant. During this time you might pass on an encouraging comment to someone in your group who you have noticed has been faithfully, albeit quietly, serving Christ within the church.

LOVE HUMILITY GIFTING

...serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews' ... Acts 20:19

By now we have seen from Scripture that serving is an essential Christian trait. But there is an even greater reason why believers need to serve. By serving Christians grow because they are developing the most difficult of Christ-like qualities.

1. According to Ephesians 4:2, what are the essential elements to serving within a church among other believers?

2. Why is humility so necessary for a church to be strong and healthy?

3. Why is it not possible to apply First Peter 3:8 without serving? (Refer to Colossians 3:12)

4. Why is being humble so difficult?

In a message on Humility by Dr John Dickson, he defines 'humility' as withholding your power for the good of another. He tells the story of an African American man riding a bus when a few young men get onto the same bus. They decide to target this seemingly vulnerable quiet guy and call him names and tell him to get out of their seat. Without any fuss, he arises to their audible gasp as they realise they had greatly underestimated his size...

5. What does the Lord promise for those who are humble for His sake? (Matthew 18:4; 23:12; Luke 18:14)

6. Read Philippians 2:3. Based on this verse, what should humility look like within a church?

LOVE HUMILITY GIFTING

... As he walked past them, he handed one of them his business card- JOE LEWIS Professional Boxer. Joe Lewis would go on to become the Heavy Weight Boxing Champion of the world shortly after this. John Dickson illustrates his definition of humility with this story. Can you see how it illustrates what humility is? Have you ever had any moments like this?

7. According to Galatians 5:13, what is the essential ingredient necessary for Christ-like service?

8. Based on Hebrews 6:10, what two particular things does it say that God won't forget or overlook?

Believers are servants because they love. If you want to become a stronger believer and enjoy greater blessing, develop your love for others: serve them (Mark 12:31; John 15:13).

9. Consider in what ways obeying Colossians 3:12-15 will affect the health of a church. Which part of this passage do you think most believers would find the most challenging?

Some people find serving very natural. These people shy away from being upfront and in the spotlight. They also see needs before most others.

10. Based on Romans 12:6, why might this be so, and how would someone know if this was for them?

We all need to learn how to serve. There are opportunities for us to serve within the church and in our worlds. We have opportunities to share the love of Christ through our serving within our homes, our schools, our workplaces, and our clubs. If you really want to learn how to serve well, watch those who are gifted at it. Do you know someone is gifted with an ability to serve? What is it that they do that you would like to be able to do? May God help us to serve Him as we serve Him and serve His people?

Next Study: Humbling And Servanthood

HUMBLING AND SERVANTHOOD

Study Overview

The depth of a believer's Christ-like maturity is commensurate with their Christ-like Servanthood. Like Christ, these believers respond to life's interruptions as opportunities to serve someone. In this way, they avoid being so task-driven in their Servanthood that they forget that it's actually about helping people. If we want to be a stronger, healthier church, we must become a humbler more servant spirited church. And if we commit to becoming this type of believer and this type of church, we can expect that our commitment will be tested.

How do servant-spirited people react to mean-spirited people? In this concluding study on Servanthood we are going to explore the choice to serve when it's hard to do so. To choose to respond to difficult situations in a humble way is one of the hallmarks of the mature believer. (This was best exemplified by our Lord when He was being reviled and despised by those He came to save.) We have to make choices to respond humbly to our protagonists by serving those who provoke us. By doing this we are heaping burning coals on the heads of our adversaries (Prov 25:21-22).

To follow Christ in humility, we need to avoid the opposite spirit of humility: pride. It was pride that led to the fall of satan. It is pride that justifies our lack of service. It is because of pride that someone claiming to be a believer will feel 'above' their brothers and sisters in Christ. Pride divides and ultimately destroys. Its victims are families, marriages, and churches. We want to help people to realise that offences will come and that we are called to respond humbly with a servant-spirit.

We also must avoid the need for "recognition" when serving others and their needs. If the underlying motive and goal is some form of self-love, like the praise and acknowledgement of others, then one's service is in reality hypocritical. This type of service is really aimed at serving selfish ends—usually in the futile pursuit of personal significance through something like praise, power, or status.

HUMBLING AND SERVANTHOOD

To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head'... Romans 12:20

"To the contrary..." being a servant is contrary to the spirit of this world. At the moment when the apostles thought they were preparing to reign with Christ they began bickering who would be the greatest in Christ's Kingdom. It was at this time that Jesus took a bowl of water and a towel and began to clean the dirty feet of His followers (John 13:3-8).

1. Based on the events of John 13:3-8, why was Jesus so disappointed with His disciples?

2. In what way is bickering and disunity the sin of pride? (Refer to John 13:3-8, and Ephesians 4:1-2)

Humility is withholding your 'power' for the good of others. Humility beautifies. It makes a person attractive. Do you know someone who is very intelligent but when they are with 'unlearned' people they don't 'speak down' or use their learning to impress those they are with? Such people have learned how to humbly handle their power. In this way a learned person can serve others with their knowledge in a humble way.

3. Sometimes we only think of manual service as the only legitimate way to serve others. But how else might a servant-spirited believer serve others?

For a church to be strong and healthy it needs everybody serving with their gifts, talents, and abilities. The challenge is for those who are called to intercession to do so without being asked, appointed, or applauded. For those with a pastoral gift their challenge is going to be to encourage the struggling without becoming critical. Those with the gift of giving are going to face the challenge of giving "no-strings attached."

HUMILITY & SERVICE AS A SIGN OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiving is perhaps one of the greatest challenges for the believer. Forgiveness is a fruit of, not a condition for, salvation.

4. Why is it imperative to forgive those who offend us based on Matthew 6:14?

5. In what way does Colossians 3:13 require humility of us?

Is it necessary to trust those you serve? Is it necessary to trust those you forgive? Is it necessary to be willing to serve those who have offended you?

6. Have you ever served someone you who has offended you or mistreated you? What affect did this have on your service?

There will be times when you are hurt by offence within the church. Many times it will be unintentional. This doesn't excuse it or justify it, but it should arm us. That is, knowing that people are people both within and outside the church, we should be armed with the spiritual warfare weapons of forgiveness and humility and to be ready to serve that person in love. This is what Christ did. We had deeply offended Him, yet Christ reached out to us in humble, loving, service.

7. How does Romans 12:19-20 advise us to respond to those who offend or hurt us? Is it possible to obey this without humility?

Greatness is not found in a title, a salary, or a position of influence. True greatness is found in Servanthood. We must be willing to seek the best for others rather than for ourselves. Jesus said, "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there my servant will be also; if anyone serves me, the Father will honour him" (John 12:26). Willingly meet the needs of others without looking for recognition from people. God's Word promises that He will honour your humility. And when believers finally realize that our calling is to serve—not seek our own interests—then we will have an irresistible impact on this world and everyone in it.