

## How We Grow: Implementing the Spiritual Disciplines

Week 8 - Service

May 5, 2024

Additional Teaching Notes

Hebrews 13:16 says "Don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God."

We should be continually living with the mindset of service. We should always be asking ourselves "How can I serve God today by serving others?"

Matthew 5:16 says "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven."

Service is the act of helping or doing work for someone else, often those who are in need. It is showing kindness and favor to other people by helping, by assisting, by aiding them.

True service is not born out of guilt or obligation, but rather it is born out of love and gratitude. In order to serve others, it requires a pretty healthy dose of humility, strength, and love. We serve, because Christ himself came to serve us.

Service born out of selfishness is not service. That's because true, Christian service is selfless. It never has an expectation of praise and accolades when done, because that's not true service. If we are to glorify God while serving, selfish motives can not be present. Galatians 5:13 tells us to serve one another with humility and love.

When we serve others, it allows us to experience a deeper and greater appreciation for all God has done for us. Service to others helps us build relationships. Service to others allows others to see Jesus through us.

Jesus really is the ultimate example of being a servant. We read about it in Philippians 2, when Jesus set aside all the wonders of Heaven, all the privileges of being God, to become human, to walk alongside His creation, and willingly go to the cross. While here on earth, with His eyes set on the goal of living a sinless life to die for our sins, he also took time to heal the sick, feed the hungry, teach the lost, and love the unlovable.

Even as he went into His last days on earth, he served his companions by washing their feet in John 13. And He called us all to serve as well.

This idea is somewhat counter-cultural, because society tends to tell us that we need the best, live at the top, and have others serve us.

Or even worse, many people adopt the mentality that "someone else will take care of it" instead of helping and serving on their own. This sadly even bleeds into the church mindset. We need to be careful that we don't turn the church into a place where the elders or the ministers or the deacons, or those appointed to a leadership position take care of everything. If something needs to be done, and we have the ability to do it, we should do it.

The old adage of JOY works well in the idea of service. Jesus first, other second, yourself last.

How can I serve my Savior? How can I serve His Kingdom? How can I help the church be the best version of itself? Are there tasks and responsibilities that need to be taken care of that the same three or four people always take care of? Instead of saying "who can I get to fix this?" - why not say "You know what, I'm going to come and fix this next week."

How do you serve others? Taking care of people and providing for people in their time of need is one way. But also - we pass by people every day in need. The homeless, the sick, the widows, they will always be with us.

And they each provide an opportunity to serve others. In a lot of those situations, they can't do much to serve us back, so this gives an opportunity to provide true service.

We can serve others by opening up our home to others. Having people over for dinner, having conversation and fellowship - this is an act of service.

You can serve others by being there for them, by listening to them, by being a shoulder to cry on in their time of grief. Every single one of us benefit from having people to talk to and share things with, so why not be that person for someone?

Another way we can serve is by shining the spotlight on others, praising them and lifting them up for their good deeds.

We should always be ready and willing to serve. In I Samuel 3:10, after hearing a voice call out for him many times, Samuel finally understood it was God calling for him. And in response, after again calling out to him, Samuel said "Speak, for your servant is listening." We should try to have that mentality for every and all opportunities of service - your servant is listening, what can I do to help?

Richard Foster encourages us to wake up every morning and pray: 'Lord Jesus, as it would please you, bring me someone today who I can serve.' How about starting every day this week with this prayer and seeing how God leads you?

Serving your family at home is a great way to start. Think about how much good it does your family when they come home to a place where everyone always puts the needs of others above themselves. In this environment, those who serve will be served.

Laundry doesn't do itself. Dishes don't wash themselves. Food doesn't get prepared on it's own. Service to others is as simple as this.

As you seek to grow in this spiritual discipline of service, why not pray for wisdom and discernment when those opportunities arise so you'll know whether or not you should say yes. Saying yes to every service opportunity may not be the best option. In fact, there will be times when you cannot help or serve. It's easy to get burned out. No is an acceptable answer.