

What It Means To Be A Servant

Marshall Reid

We live in a culture in which most people are seeking their own interests first, and if they have time, or if it ultimately helps themselves, they might consider helping someone else. By nature, we are selfish creatures. We desire praise and honor. We want to be first. We enjoy being served.

The problem is that this is antithetical to the behavior of a Christian. It's the opposite of whom Jesus was and who we are to be. Jesus had to correct his disciples when they were guilty of the same selfish ambition (Mark 10:35-45). In that passage, he tells them a principle that we see in so many places in Scripture: we are to be servants. He gave himself as the example to follow when he said, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (vs. 45). So what does it mean to be a servant? How do we follow Christ's example and become a servant?

First, we must develop the attitude of a servant. This is perhaps the greatest barrier of all to being a servant. As stated before, we are naturally selfish beings. Plus, we live in a culture that is permeated with the message, "Serve me!" To develop the attitude of a servant, it takes a determined desire to consider others first. *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others"* (Phil. 2:3-4). Jesus is again the example for this type of attitude, for he thought of us instead of himself when he took *"the form of a servant,"* and when *"he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"* (Phil. 2:7, 8).

The underlying motivation for being a servant is love. That's why Jesus was willing to give up his position of honor and glory in heaven and come in the form of a servant. That's why he was willing to die. Because he loved us. It's why we should serve one another. Paul said, *"Through love serve on another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'"* (Gal. 5:13-14). If we truly love our brother, then being a servant will be much easier to do. In fact, we'll *want* to serve.

Secondly, know what you need to do to serve. A servant can only serve when he knows what he needs to do. Some servants wait until they're told what to do, and if they aren't given any specific instructions will fill their time with their own desires. But good servants, those who truly enjoy serving and want to serve, will not wait until they're told what to do. They'll look for a task that needs doing and do it.

In order to be this kind of servant, you must get involved. The old adage is true: the more you put into something, the more you get out of it. When you determine to get involved and look for those opportunities to serve, you won't be disappointed. Opportunities abound to be a servant of others. But you'll never see them or know about them unless you make the effort to be involved in other people's lives, in the church, or in the community.

Thirdly, serve! It's not enough to know what to do to be a servant; we must actually serve! Sometimes, this comes down to the first point of having the attitude of a servant. We may know what we need to do, but we don't want to because of selfish reasons. Other times, we end up

making excuses, allowing other things to get in the way of serving. How many times have we have felt badly knowing that we could have and should have served in some way but procrastinated or got busy with our own activities and therefore missed the opportunity to serve? It's not that we didn't want to or that we didn't love the person. We just didn't make the effort. *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin"* (James 4:17).

We need to constantly remind ourselves that this life is not about us. It's not about our own pleasures. It's not about work. It's not about school. It's not about what we may find important to us. It's about God, and it's about others. The two greatest commandments are to love God with all our hearts, soul, and mind, and to love others as ourselves (Mark 12:29-31). So when we have the attitude of a servant and know what we need to do, then we need to take the initiative and actually serve. Let's not make any more excuses.

Having the attitude of a servant will totally change the way we view every relationship in our life. It will change the way we view our church family and the reason we belong to a local church. Instead of focusing on what we get out of our relationships or out of the worship service, we need to focus on what we're putting into it. We need to focus on helping others. We need to focus on giving God the honor and praise he is due and on exhorting our brothers and sisters. We need to follow the example of Jesus and serve. Who can you serve today?