



DECEMBER - SERVICE

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE RELEASE

## Overview- December: Service

As we look at the month of December and all that it brings with it—the Advent reminders of Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love—it seems inevitable that we look to find ways to embody those values. Service is a beautiful practice that allows us to take actions that reflect the nature of our Almighty Father.

Service, as a Spiritual Practice, is about offering resources, including time, influence, expertise and/or finances for the care, protection, justice and nurturing of others. By committing ourselves to service we give hands and feet to the second greatest commandment, to “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31). This is a practice that should be grounded in prayer and experienced with passion. Creating disciples that listen to where God is calling them to serve (in the church, the local community, or the broader world) begins by creating opportunities for youth to learn and serve people and causes that resonate with their souls.

This month we have curated several sources: articles, activities, books etc. to help you as you lead your youth. It is our hope that the resources collected here will help you assist your youth in discovering their passion for service on behalf of the Kingdom of God, to serve others as Jesus served his followers.

We believe that Service is a great practice that will bring a lot of value to you and your youth as you grow closer to Jesus. It is our prayer that, this month, you, and your youth can collectively, or individually, find a place to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

If you have any questions, or would like to recommend a resource to add to this release, please contact CBOQ Youth by emailing Meghan at [mmatthews@baptist.ca](mailto:mmatthews@baptist.ca)

Blessings to you this month,

The CBOQ Youth team



## Scriptures About Service

The following scriptures are about service. They are a great place to start when trying to get into the right *heart space* for this practice. May your hands and feet follow in service where God leads your heart.

### Isaiah 58: 6-7 (MSG)

This is the kind of fast day I'm after:

to break the chains of injustice,  
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,  
free the oppressed,  
cancel debts.

What I'm interested in seeing you do is:

sharing your food with the hungry,  
inviting the homeless poor into your homes,  
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,  
being available to your own families.

### Matthew 22: 37-39

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

### John 12:26

Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

### John 13:14-15

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

### Mark 10: 43-44

...whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

### 1 Peter 4:10

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.



## LESSON SAMPLE (1 Hour Version)

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

#### Students Will:

- Prepare their hearts for service by spending time in scripture
- Brainstorm ideas for serving. Answering the questions: who, what, where, and why
- Discover which needs and people are important for them to care for
- Begin to plan for a service project that they are passionate about

#### Materials Needed:

- Bibles for each participant OR copies of John 13: 1-17 (printable version below)
- Pens
- Paper (or ask people to bring a journal to write in)
- Timer, phone or some other way to keep track of time
- Large paper for each team
- Markers for each person

#### Setup:

- Consider splitting students into teams of no more than 4 people in advance.
- Make sure there are flat stable surfaces for students to write on and that supplies are available
- On a separate big piece of paper (or on a whiteboard/chalkboard) write out the questions from activity #2 so students can read them

#### Online Adaptations:

- Invite participants to turn off their cameras during their quiet reflection time (Activity 1)
- Let them know that you will turn your camera back on when it's time to gather again
- Consider creating Google docs that students can connect to easily and use to combine ideas (Activity 2, example below). When it is time to review other group's work, you can put all the links in the chat box
- Write the questions for reflection (Activity #1) and presenting (Activity #2) in the chat box

#### Preamble:

**SAY:** Today we are going to prepare our hearts for the spiritual practice of *service*. Once we have spent some time getting ourselves ready, we will begin to brainstorm ways that we can *do* the practice of service.



## Activity #1: 10-15 minutes\*

**SAY:** We are going to prepare our hearts for serving by spending some time in reflection. Each of us is going to spend time reading a section of scripture. It's the story of how Jesus took time at one of the most important junctures of his earthly life to serve his disciples.

We are going to take 10 minutes\* to read this story in silence, and I invite you to read, think about and pray through the story. Really imagine what it's like to be in the story, imagine you're Jesus, imagine you're one of the disciples; what would you be feeling, seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing? Take your time, jot down any notes or thoughts that come to you during this time.

When time is up, I'll let you know.

\*Adapt this time to suit your group, if they are new to spending time in quiet reflection with the bible shorten the time but try to make it at least 8-10 minutes. Consider it a challenge! If your group is highly reflective and/or studious, you could lengthen the time for this activity.

## Debrief: 5-8 minutes

Spend some time asking your group the following questions:

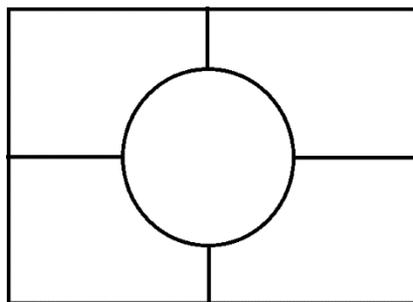
- How did it feel to spend that much time with scripture?
- What thoughts did you have that you would like to share?
- How did Jesus model the importance of serving others?

## Activity #2: 30-40 minutes

### Instructions: Stage One

- 1) Split students into teams of 3-4. No more than 4.
- 2) Divide your piece of large paper into 5 sections: draw a large circle in the middle (we are going to use this section last, so make sure it's a full fifth of the page) and divide the rest of the page into 4 sections (see below for example).
- 3) Write the following four words, one in each section: Places (to serve), People (to help), Things (to do), Reasons (to serve).

**Tip:** Be sure to assign each team a number (this will be important in the second part of the activity).



**SAY:** “Each person in your team will get the chance to write in each section. You’ll get 3 minutes each round. In each section write out as many ideas as you can in the time you are allotted. This is brainstorming, so there are no bad ideas! If someone has already written down an idea that you had (for example, shoveling driveways for people in the congregation), write it down again. The point is to get down as many ideas as possible. Don’t spend your 3 minutes reading other people’s comments yet, we’ll do that later.

Ask if any clarification is needed

4) Start going through the brainstorming (rotating every 3 minutes)

### **Instructions: Stage Two**

1) After the final brainstorming round, invite people to get up and walk around. They can begin to read what else was written in their group and what other groups have written. If a participant sees an idea that they like (in any of the sections) they should put a star or checkmark next to it. (Give students ~5 to do this).

2) Have students return to their original tables, review their starred ideas and have a conversation about which ideas they think are the most interesting, the ones they think could be accomplished, the ones that are the most important. (5 minutes)

Based on their conversation ask teams to come up their “one” idea their team is most passionate about and write it in the middle circle on their page. This should be a single main idea that should pull themes from each of the four sections. (2 minutes)

3) Ask students to showcase their “one” idea to the other groups.

Ask them to make sure they answer the four key questions from each section:

- i. Who are you serving?
- ii. Where are you serving?
- iii. What are you doing to serve?
- iv. Why is this service important?

**Bonus:** (Consider asking this as a follow-up question) What are some key supplies, equipment, or contacts/connections might be needed for this particular project?

4) Once all teams have presented their ideas, ask people to vote for the “one” idea they feel the group should pursue. You can do this in any way that makes sense for your group: show of hands, ballot boxes, post-it note on the page that has the idea they like best, etc. Depending on the size of your group, you could offer 1 vote/person, or multiple votes for any idea they’re feeling passionate about.

The point is to determine which service project (or projects) you are going to move forward with.

For ideas on how to plan your project, see the articles, links, and resources in CBOQ Youth’s Monthly Release on Service.



## Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

<sup>13</sup> It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

<sup>8</sup> "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

<sup>9</sup> "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup> "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

## LESSON SAMPLE (15 Minute Version)

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

#### Students Will:

- Learn about the importance of service by spending time in scripture

#### Materials Needed:

- Bibles for each participant OR copies of John 13: 1-17 (printable version below)
- Pens
- Paper (or ask people to bring a journal to write in)
- Timer, phone or some other way to keep track of time

#### Set Up:

- Have scripture, pens, and paper available for your participants

#### Online Adaptations:

- Invite participants to turn off their cameras during their quiet reflection time
- Let them know that you will turn your camera back on when it's time to gather again
- Write the questions for reflection in the chat box

#### Preamble:

Today we are going to prepare our hearts for the spiritual practice of *service*. Once we have spent some time preparing our hearts by reading about how Jesus served, we will reflect on how we can develop this practice in our own lives.

**Note:** This could be an activity to do before *doing* a service project.

#### Activity #1: 7-10 minutes\*

We are going to prepare our hearts for serving by spending some time in reflection. Each of us is going to read a section of scripture. It's the story of how Jesus took time at one of the most important junctures of his earthly life to serve his disciples.

We are going to take 10 minutes\* to read this story in silence, and I invite you to read, think about and pray through the story. Really imagine what it's like to be in the story, imagine you're Jesus, imagine you're one of the disciples; what would you be feeling, seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing? Take your time, jot down any notes or thoughts that come to you during this time.

When time is up, I'll let you know.

\*Adapt this time to suit your group, if they are new to spending time in quiet reflection with the bible shorten the time but try to make it at least 8-10 minutes. Consider it a challenge! If your group is highly reflective and/or studious, you could lengthen the time for this activity.



## Debrief: 5-8 minutes

Spend some time asking your group the following questions:

- How did it feel to spend that much time with scripture?
- Did anyone have any thoughts that they would like to share?
- How did Jesus model the importance of serving others?
- Where can you see yourself offering service to others (in your daily life, through volunteer opportunities, etc.)

## Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

<sup>13</sup> It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup>The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup>Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup>so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup>After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

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# RESOURCES

## Book List for Service

Salvatierra, Alexia, and Peter Heltzel. *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World.*

Searcy, Nelson, and Jennifer Dykes Henson. *The Greatness Principle: Finding Significance and Joy by Serving Others.*

Sjogren, Steve. *Conspiracy of Kindness: A Unique Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus.*

Tan, Siang-Yang. *Full Service: Moving from Self-Serve Christianity to Total Servanthood.*

### General Books on Spiritual Practices:

Ahlberg-Calhoun, Adele. *The Spiritual Practices Handbook.*

Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline.*

Shiflett, Diana. *Spiritual Practices in Community.*

Smith, Traci. *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home.*

Thompson, Marjorie. *Soul Feast.*

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines.*



## Articles, Videos and Ideas for Service as a Spiritual Practice

### Articles:

#### Service Project Ideas

[10 Creative Community Service Projects for Your Youth Group](#)

[10 Easy Ways to Serve Someone Today](#)

[25 Community Service Ideas for Youth Groups](#)

#### Thoughts about Service

[5 Steps to Serving Others Well](#)

[Self-Right-eous Ser-vice Ver-sus True Service](#)

[Ser-vice: A Prac-ti-cal Guide](#)

[Under-stand-ing Service](#)

[Spiritual Disciplines- Service](#)

### Videos:

[Argyle Road Baptist Church: The Spiritual Discipline of Service<sup>1</sup>](#)

[Intro to Service<sup>2</sup>](#)

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<sup>1</sup> This is a sermon from one of our Canadian Baptist churches from Saskatchewan!

<sup>2</sup> This is a good 2ish minute intro to Service, what it's about, where in the Bible we are instructed to serve, and how our view of our self-impacts how we can help others.



## **Organizations to Connect with:**

### **For International Service:**

Canadian Baptist Ministries: <https://www.cbmin.org/>

Look under “Your Story” in the main menu to see ways to help Poverty, Justice, Kids at Risk and Building the Church options and ideas.

### **Local Ideas:**

Food Banks

Clothing Donation Centres

Libraries

Community Centres

Retirement Communities

Community Gardens, hiking trails, arboretums, or nature conservatories

...etc.



## A Lesson in Service

### What is Service?

- What do people mean when they greet military personnel with, “Thank you for your service?”
- What different motivations might people have for serving others?
- What motivation does God want us to have in serving others?
- How did Jesus serve?

### Let's look at the Word

Read John 13:1-17:

- Who did Jesus serve?
- Why is washing feet something the disciples wouldn't necessarily volunteer to do? Who usually washed other people's feet?
- What lesson was Jesus trying to teach his disciples?
- Was this a lesson they needed to learn? (See Luke 22:24-26.)

Read Luke 9:48. Richard Foster comments that many of us do not aspire to be the greatest. However, which of us would aspire to be the least?

- Why is being the “least” difficult? Where on a scale of one to ten is the task of washing feet?
- What makes doing a menial task for someone else difficult?

Read Luke 9:23. What is Jesus asking us to do?

Richard Foster says that submission to God comes before service. We must put ourselves aside to serve God and others.

- Why is submission a necessary step toward Godly service?
- How do we “die to self” when we serve others?
- Why does Jesus ask that we put aside ourselves and our own wishes when we serve others?
- How will practicing acts of kindness, charitable giving, and rendering service to others impact our relationship with God?
- How will these practices further our growth in our faith and godliness?

Read 1 Peter 4:10,11, 1 Corinthians 10:31, and Colossians 3:17,23,24. What instructions do these verses give us regarding serving others?



## Time to Get Practical

It's easy to allow our service to be outward displays. It's also easy to "do what we've always done" and become comfortable with our status quo. If we work in the church nursery, serve on the benevolence committee, and invite the preacher and his energetic children over to dinner once a year, we think we're doing alright!

Stretch yourself this week. Here's some faith challenges to improve your serve:

- Do something for someone else that you've never done before.
- Do something for someone else that they won't know about so they can't thank you.
- Do something for someone who has been unkind to you. In other words, overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

## Follow-up

How did you do? How were you blessed? You may not see any results or "feel" anything. Know that God sees what you do, and He is saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Does it feel uncomfortable? Clumsy? People criticized your motives. Don't grow weary of doing good. After all, just like any other spiritual discipline, active service takes practice.

Adapted From: <https://karenwingate.com/service-spiritual-practices-bible-study/>



## Questions and a Reminder about Service

1. How would you define the Discipline of Service? Are you a person who desires to give it all to our Lord? If not, why not?
2. What role does Service play in your relationships with church members, friends, coworkers, and family?
3. What is the cost to your life personally and to the people around you when you refuse to Serve Christ or others?
4. What happens when your church leaders refuse to Serve, so their position is just for power and control for their will, not for God's Will?
5. What are some of the self-will behaviors and actions that you need to give over to God so you can follow Him and live not just to yourself but to serve others with your time, talents, and treasures?
6. When have you exercised Service the most? What is the difference between Service and apathy? What causes Christians to be apathetic or have an entitlement mentality?
7. In what situation did you fail to Serve when you should have? If someone wrote a one-sentence summary of your life, what would it say?
8. What are the benefits to Christ when you Serve? How can the Discipline of Service help you gain happiness apart from accomplishing your own will or seeking what you want?
9. What would real, authentic Service look like in your life? How about in your church?
10. What issue is in your life that would improve with more Service? How can this Discipline of Service help reveal the motives of your heart?
11. How can this Discipline of Service enable you to receive Jesus, not just as Savior, but as Lord, so He can empower you? How can you receive His work in you and become His worker for others?
12. Think through the steps that you need to take to put Service into action in a specific instance. For example, how can you use this Discipline of Service to improve your church? Think of an opportunity that may fit your Spiritual gifts or talents. How much time are you willing to set aside each week for the Lord and His needs that can be done through you? When will you do it? Remember, this is a discipline, and we have to keep at it!

When Jesus took a towel to wash His disciples' feet, He completely redefined what leadership and service are. He made the point that they are not about pride or position in the world, but rather our position in Him. A bowl and towel would be perfect because they represent service, as our ultimate Server, Christ, washed His disciple's feet. Christ came to serve to exemplify service. True service is a response, just as our Lord demonstrated. It comes from our gratitude in realizing who Christ is, what He has shown us we can do, and our opportunities and our response in gladness (Mat 20:27-28; Luke 22:27; John 12:25-26; 13:2-5; Phil 2:1-4).



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## Service

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”*

– Colossians 3:23-24

Service is possibly one of the most familiar of all the disciplines. Most people at some point in their lives have had the opportunity of serving in some way. Fewer have had the experience of service as a discipline. Service as a discipline is the intentional use of our time, abilities, or resources for the good of others. Service may take place in a local church setting, volunteering for a charitable organization, or spontaneously in individual settings. The importance is not derived from the context, but the purpose and transformation that takes place in the heart of the one serving.

Service is a discipline that directly targets many attitudes that are present in our culture today, such as entitlement and pride. Today it is very common to find an expectation of “being served” as opposed to “serving.” Dallas Willard points out that service is an excellent way to “train myself away from arrogance, possessiveness, envy, resentment, or covetousness.”<sup>i</sup> In other words, many hard to reach areas of sin are confronted and transformed by this simple discipline.

-  Many opportunities for service exist right in one’s neighborhood. Consider serving your neighbor by an act of kindness such as mowing his lawn, washing her car, or raking up leaves.
-  Be available to assist others with needs that arise. An example of this would be helping someone move.
-  If you are not currently involved in a ministry at your church, talk with your pastor about areas where you might be able to serve on a regular basis.

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<sup>i</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of The Disciplines* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 182.

# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

## Christian Service

### I. Review and Introduction

This week, we will discuss the spiritual discipline of Christian service. Service is regularly referenced in the Scriptures and is a key aid in our sanctification. It is a spiritual discipline that is clearly expected of all believers, though how we serve looks different from person to person based upon a whole variety of factors. Service is often not glamorous. As Don Whitney observes, “Serving typically looks as unspectacular as the practical needs it seeks to meet.”<sup>1</sup> It is precisely because most forms of service are “unspectacular” that this discipline is so crucial to conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ.

### II. Understanding the Discipline

Christian service is using your spiritual gifts and natural or acquired abilities and talents to serve others for the glory of God, the good of others, and your own growth in godliness. Most Christians agree that service is important. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to practice service as an intentional spiritual discipline. Some people are just naturally hard workers who avoid the limelight; these folks may find it difficult to serve others “unto the Lord.” Others do not like to serve unless their service is recognized; these folks mostly desire the praise of other people. Still others are too proud to serve; these folks like being up front, but they do not like to put others before themselves.

The fact is, Christian service is unnatural (in a good way) because it takes our focus off of ourselves and directs our attention and, Lord willing, our affections towards others. As Richard Foster argues, “Of all the classical Spiritual Disciplines, service is the most conducive to the growth of humility.”<sup>2</sup> Though it may sound paradoxical, Christian service benefits us spiritually precisely because it seeks the good of others. In fact, the difference between the spiritual discipline of Christian service and simply helping others is primarily a matter of motivation. Christian service is gospel-driven work in that it is motivated by the two greatest commandments to love God and love our neighbors (Matt. 22:36–40). As Whitney argues, “No fuel for service burns longer and provides more energy than love.”<sup>3</sup> When our motives are healthy and God-honoring, Christian service becomes a privilege rather than a burden—even when it is really hard work.

Christian service assumes a community; you cannot serve unless there are others to be served! Unlike meditation and often prayer and fasting, service is necessarily a corporate discipline. John Ortberg speaks of Christianity as a “society of sinners helping each other.”<sup>4</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “The Church does not need brilliant personalities but faithful servants of Jesus and the brethren. Not in the former but in the latter is the lack.”<sup>5</sup> The local church should be a covenanted community of disciples who serve God through their worship and serve others through their words (witness) and deeds (activism).



### III. The Discipline in the Scriptures

#### The Goal of all Spiritual Disciplines

Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. (1 Tim. 4:7b-10)

#### Jesus Was the God's Chosen Servant and Expects His Followers to be Servants

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (Isa. 42:1-4; cf. 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12)

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ (Matthew 25:31-40)

And whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:44-45; cf. Matt. 20:28)

And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35)

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.



Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:1-17)

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (Phil. 2:3-7)

### **Service Should be Motivated by Love and Humility**

The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matt. 23:11-12)

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Gal. 5:13)

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Phil. 2:1-4)

Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. (Heb. 13:1-3)

### **Service is Ultimately Unto the Lord and Contributes to Our Growth in Godliness**

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become



obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:15-23 ESV)

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. (1 Cor. 4:1)

### **It is Hypocritical to Serve in Order to Receive the Praise of Others**

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matt. 6:1-4)

### **The Lord Gifts Us For Service to Others**

Then Moses said to the people of Israel, “See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer.

“Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the LORD has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded.”

And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whose mind the LORD had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work. (Exod. 35:30-36:2)

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching. (Rom. 12:6-7)



Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Cor. 12:4-11)

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. 4:9-11)

### **Pastors and Other Leaders Equip God's People for Service**

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, (Eph. 4:11-13)

### **Service is a Blessing to the Servant and the Served**

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

## **IV. Practicing the Discipline**

Every Christian should practice the spiritual discipline of Christian service in whatever ways the Lord leads. Because discipline entails work, we should all look for ways to serve that get us out of our comfort zones and cause us to make sacrifices. As Whitney reminds us, "Service that costs nothing accomplishes nothing."<sup>6</sup> If you are never being stretched in your service, chances are you are not growing spiritually through your service.



There are many ways to practice this discipline faithfully, depending upon your unique circumstances, gifts, and abilities:

- 1) Figure out your spiritual gift(s) and use them (how has the Lord gifted you to serve the body?)
- 2) Consider how to use your natural or acquired talents and abilities to serve others (sanctified abilities are as useful to the body as spiritual gifts)
- 3) Serve where you sense a need (Be like Nike and “Just Do It”)
- 4) Serve where you do not want to at least some of the time (God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life—in Extended Session)
- 5) Look for ways to serve “behind the scenes” to avoid the limelight (this is especially needed for elders, teachers, musicians, and others who are up front a lot)
- 6) Equip, empower, and unleash others to serve (this is part of the responsibility of elders and deacons)
- 7) Prioritize service within the body first, but then reach outside the body as well (Service to others has often been an apologetic for the faith in church history)
- 8) Practice service as a form of personal worship (serve unto the Lord)

## V. Recommended Resources

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Harper San Francisco, 1998). Chapter 9.

John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Zondervan, 2002). Chapter 7.

Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (NavPress, 2014).

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## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (NavPress, 2014), p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Harper San Francisco, 1998), p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, p. 150.

<sup>4</sup> John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Zondervan, 2002), p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 5 (Fortress Press, 2005), p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, p. 154.



## SERVICE PROJECT IDEAS

- Start an Internet Prayer Blog
- Use a drama ministry in public
- Volunteer to help with the Special Olympics
- Raise money for extra Bibles to give away
- Lead a Camping/Fishing weekend
- Just be open & nonjudgmental
- Serve on an Indian Reservation
- Upward Sports
- Host a Lock-In
- Prepare care packages for short-term mission teams
- Start or publicize a Celebrate Recovery
- Be a door greeter at church on Sunday
- Join an Angel Food Ministry
- Eat breakfast with a different Sunday school class
- Perform Random Acts of Kindness
- Sack Groceries at the store
- Help people put up & take down Christmas lights
- Buy someone else's meal at the drive-thru
- Give a compliment to a stranger
- Buy safety gear for police dogs
- Sponsor & pray for an orphanage
- Invite a friend to see "To Save a Life" movie
- Coordinate a team to help people move
- Donate to Locks of Love
- Teach languages in a Multi-Cultural setting
- Give out Christian Bumper Stickers
- Read the Bible to the blind
- Feed, clothe, & shelter the poor
- S.O.S. Services Offering Safety
- Participate in a blood drive
- Teach a self-defense class
- Cleanup a local cemetery
- Sell T-shirts as a fundraiser
- Host a Women's event & paint nails
- Sit with an older person or widow @ church
- Participate in a regular church service
- Pray for your town daily
- Teach crafts @ a nursing home
- Start a Coffee House ministry
- Provide car care
- Take Family Portraits
- Plan a Volleyball tournament
- Provide new batteries for smoke detectors
- Facebook driven ministry
- Operation Christmas Child
- Sponsor a Dodgeball Tournament
- Cleanup a Baseball field in town
- Pickup service for local business for recyclables
- "Thirst No More" water bottle giveaway
- Volunteer or start a Soup Kitchen
- Start a Paintball ministry



- Hold a 5<sup>th</sup> Quarter after a basketball game
- Plan a Teach Appreciation day
- Donate spare change to missions
- Serve a special Holiday meal
- Volunteer @ Webster Conference Center
- Volunteer at the Humane Society
- Volunteer at a City Rescue Mission
- Provide a dog walking service
- Collect baby blankets for pregnancy crisis center
- Hold an youth auction
- Organize a sports camp for younger kids
- Help ladies at church decorate the church
- Participate in “Toys for Tots”
- Pamper night for Moms
- Lead a Bible study
- Join a Pro-life Movement
- Ring a bell for Salvation Army
- Organize a city-wide church alliance
- Play music at a retirement home
- Hold a community dance
- Help out with home improvement
- Lead a prayer meeting
- Do a church workday
- Participate in an AIDS walk
- Collect Blankets for a local Hospital
- Plan a Block Party
- Give free Music Lessons
- Teach the elderly to use a computer
- Help out in the school lunch room
- Find ways to reach out to troubled teens
- Sponsor a kid through Compassion
- Participate in World Changers
- Plan a Valentine’s Banquet
  - Bake Cookies
  - Stay after school to help a teacher
  - Pick up trash at your school
  - Sponsor a poor child
  - Assist someone who is handicapped
  - Take someone elderly to the zoo
  - Host a rummage sale
  - Join a “Servant’s March”
  - Sponsor a Rescue Mission
  - Do a “Night Out” for Homeless Awareness
  - Cleanup the Cowboy Trail
  - Counsel your peers
  - Be polite & courteous to others
  - Plant flowers
  - Become a pen-pal for someone lonely
  - Adopt a Highway
  - Hold a Game Night
  - Tutor a Younger friend at school
  - Organize a city-wide youth rally
  - Do favors for church members
  - Hold a Judgment House
  - Run Errands for those that can’t
  - Meals on Wheels



- Remove Graffiti from public places
- Adopt a Grandparent
- Conduct a Backyard Bible Club
- Organize a fundraiser for local charity
- Host a free Garage Sale
- Do General Cleanup around town
- Host a cookout
- Do a “Back-to-school” drive for school supplies
- Pray for academic studies
- Plant a Flower Garden in town
- Send notes or postcards
- Reach out to Skateboarders
- Visit the Senior Center
- Start a Park Ministry
- Hold a Clothing Drive
- Wash Windows for Local Businesses
- Food Drive
- Drive-In Movie @ Church
- Trail rides or Hayrack Rides
- Prayer walk your Town
- Donate to a Pregnancy Crisis Center
- Start an After-School Ministry
- Special Ministry to Soldier’s Wives
- Cleanup at a Military Base
- Pass out Gospel Tracts around town
- Host a City-wide Dinner
- Have a Barbeque
- Volunteer to Babysit for Foster Parents
- Join the Big Brother/Big Sister ministry
- Orange Juice & Donuts at School once/month
- Mentor 1 on 1 while going out for Ice Cream
- Host a Carwash Fundraiser
- Care Packages for Soldiers
- Date Night for Parents
- Outreach to the Homeless
- Provide Laundry Service
- Drive Elderly to do their Grocery Shopping
- Start a Band or Praise Team
- Pray for Japan
- Visit people in Nursing Homes
- Visit MTC
- Visit those in the Hospital
- Assist the Salvation Army with distribution
- Rake Leaves
- Build a Float to represent Jesus in a parade
- Repaint Playground Equipment
- Clean House for the Elderly
- Teach an Exercise Class
- Go Christmas Caroling
- Do a Carnival Outreach with Inflatables
- Collect used Winter Coats for those in need
- Host a “Mom’s Night Out”
- Free Babysitting

