

Bible Study

“Empowered by Grace to Serve”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, we come to you in awe for who you are and all that you’ve done for us. Thank you for the gift of your Son who came to earth not to be served but to serve. Grant us loving and giving hearts that we may share your love within us with others. We ask for your blessing on our study. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

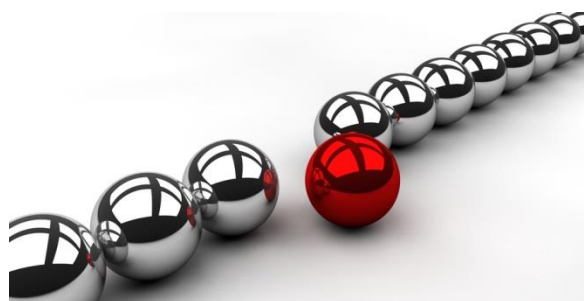
As God’s people, we are urged to “*fix our eyes on Jesus*” (Hebrews 12:2 NIV). The writer to the Philippians asserted, “*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 2:5). What is that attitude? When we “*fix our eyes on Jesus,*” what will we see?

We see the Suffering Servant about whom Isaiah wrote. The one who has “*borne our griefs and carried our sorrows*”; the one who was “*wounded for our transgressions ... crushed for our iniquities...*” and by his “*stripes we are healed*” (Isaiah 53:4, 5).

We see the Son of Man who, in his own words, “*came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*” (Matthew 20:28). This is the Son of Man who lived a childhood in obedience to his Father and to the earthly parents who were chosen for him. This is the Son of Man who preached and taught, who healed the sick, confronted the wicked, and comforted the despairing. This is the Son of Man who calls us to “*deny [ourselves] and take up [our crosses] and follow [him]*” (Matthew 16:24).

We follow him in paths of service. Just as Jesus did, we serve when it might be inconvenient or when the person needing our service is unlovable. Just as Jesus did, we put others first. Just as Jesus endured the cross “*for the joy that was set before him*” (Hebrews 12:2), we, too, will find joy and fulfillment in serving in Jesus’ name.

As God’s people, we are called to love God with all of our hearts, souls, and minds and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37). The key to our service is to live with an attitude that is God-centered. With God as our focus, we will want to love and serve him and others. Unfortunately, because we are by nature self-centered, our interest is in serving ourselves instead of serving others. When we succumb to the temptation of putting ourselves first, we place ourselves in the center of life, and we become less interested and ultimately unaware of the



needs of others. God’s grace turns us around. In Christ, He has put us first, so now we are freed to put others first.

Jesus said in Luke 4:8, “*You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.*” Our prayer is that God will enable and strengthen us to put others first as we faithfully respond to his call to serve.



Questions for Discussion

1. There are different motives for serving. How can serving someone not be pleasing to God? (See Luke 14:12-14 to find one reason.)
2. How can you contrast true service with self-serving service?
3. What are some acts of service Jesus did on earth?
4. How can you become a person who willingly serves others? (1 Corinthians 2:16b; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:13, 4:13).
5. How can serving bless the server?
6. Read Matthew 25:31-46. What were Jesus' criteria as He separated the sheep from the goats?
7. What excuses do you and others commonly use for not serving?
8. Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. What acts of service did the Good Samaritan provide? What made his service especially noteworthy? (See also Luke 17:11-19 and John 4:7-9).
9. What characteristics of a servant did the Good Samaritan exhibit? Jesus?
10. What does 1 Peter 4:10 say about your need to be in service? Identify its three parts.
11. How does Mark 12:30-31 motivate you to serve?
12. How is your service seen as God working through you, and how do you make yourself available to serve?
13. How would you contrast true service with self-serving service?
14. In which service activities are you currently involved? What service is God prompting you to do? Is there someone you know who God wants you to serve regularly and consistently?

***Prayer:** Lord, grant me a servant's heart. Help me to use my time, talents, and treasures to extend your kingdom and to serve those in need. Open my eyes and hearts for opportunities for service and use me as your instrument of love, mercy, and grace. In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.*