

BASIC CHRISTIAN FAITH AND PRACTICE 12

SERVING GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOR

Introduction: Service is an integral part of our Christianity. Without service to God our Christianity becomes dry and lifeless. In service to God our lives are joyful and shaped to resemble Jesus as the Holy Spirit works through us.

- Why would our lives be dry and lifeless without service? → Self-centeredness

I. What Is Service?

- The Bible does not really give a definition of service. It is a word that has an obvious basic meaning that the Bible assumes and fills out. At base it is the doing of another's will or acting for the good or interests of another, helping another.
- 2 types of service, to God and to others
 - When to God, it is doing his will.
 - When to others, it is acting for their good, helping them, etc.
 - How do service to God and service to others relate? → We serve God by serving others (John 14:15; 15:12, 17)
- Add to passages from John above: Galatians 5:13-14; 1 John 4:7-8; 3:16-18
 - What can we learn about service from these passages?
 - Service is the practical working out of our love for our neighbor, ignited and fueled by our love for God.

II. Service to God

- What is a bond servant? (Romans 1:1) → A servant by choice; a willing servant
- Romans 6:16-22
 - What is Paul's point in v. 16?
 - No one is absolutely free. We have both the influence of sin upon us and the influence of God. God has freed us to choose between these, but we will be slaves of one or the other based on which one we choose to yield to. Death is the outcome of slavery to sin while eternal life and blessing is the outcome of slavery to God.

-- Deuteronomy 15:12-17—"Pierce my ear."

- How might we apply this passage to the idea of service to the Lord? → This beautiful picture can serve as a great picture of the declaration we make in our hearts to the Lord when we become Christians. We are saying, "My life is better in slavery to you than on my own or anywhere else."

-- Could someone looking at your life see your "pierced ear?"

-- John 5:30 → What was Jesus' attitude towards serving God/his Father? → Sought to do his will rather than his own.

-- Luke 17:7-10 – What is the point of this parable? → v. 10; We should be servants of God who do not serve or look for thanks, but humbly serve, knowing our place and seeing serving God as our privilege, pleasure, and delight.

III. Jesus' Example

-- What example did Jesus set for us for serving others? Can you think of examples from his life? → An open question, but be sure to bring out his constant service in preaching and teaching and healing, etc.

-- John 13:3-5, 12-17

-- What does it mean to "wash one another's feet?" → To serve one another

-- How are we to be like Jesus? → Wash one another's feet = serve one another (vv. 13-15)

-- What promise does Jesus give us in serving fellow believers in imitation of him? → Blessing (v. 17)

-- How do *you* "wash other's feet?" [This is asking group members how they serve.]

-- Philippians 2:3-11

vs. 3 -- Are other people more important than you? → No

-- What is Paul saying here? → Treat others like they are more important than oneself.

-- What would this look like in practice? → Service; picture a butler, waiter, waitress, etc.

vs. 6 – How do we mirror this attitude? → v.3/v.6 → Do not regard equality with others a thing to be grasped.

-- What is the World's attitude? → The opposite

-- And where/how do we hear the World's attitude? → Culture, media, entertainment, people, etc.

-- How do you consider equality with others a thing to be grasped in your own life?

vs. 7 – How can we mirror this? What would it involve? → Putting others first, thinking about them, attending to their needs, being willing to deal with unpleasant things to help them, etc.

- Note that this passage talks about Jesus’s character. We are talking not just about service, but servanthood. Taking on the character of a servant. Not just doing nice things now and again, but being a servant, living a lifestyle of service.

vs. 8 – How far did Jesus go in his service? → Unto death!

vs. 9-11 – What does this imply for what such humble service will bring us? → Exaltation from God

-- Matthew 20:20-21, 24-28 – What does this passage teach us about service?

-- It is greatly valued by God / in his kingdom

-- It is required for leadership

-- It characterizes Jesus and is at the heart of his mission/work

- Kingdom relationships are not competitive or status oriented; look out for others, not yourself

IV. Seven Characteristics of the Servant [This Section can be covered briefly if time is short. If necessary, use discretion for which passages to cover and how much to get into them. If you cut anything out, you can remind students that they can look at the full study on our church website.]

- What characteristic of godly service do you see in these passages?

1. Anonymously – Matthew 6:1-4

2. Without complaining – Philippians 2:14-15; 1 Peter 4:9-10

3. Extravagance – Mark 14:3-9; Matthew 5:40-42 – Making available our possessions for service; doing more than expected

4. Faithfulness – Matthew 25:14-30

5. Selfless – 1 Chronicles 11:17-19 – The servant lays down his life to serve others and make them happy

-- Cf. Luke 17:7-10 discussed earlier – The servant doesn’t say, “You must care for me.” He is willing to work hard for another.

6. Perseverance (through suffering) – 2 Timothy 2:1-13 → The soldier’s mind is on the battle and the eventual outcome of eternal life.

7. Redemptive

-- 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 – Paul served in such a way as to bring salvation to everyone

-- Matthew 5:13-16 – Serving the lost with good deeds can function as a sort of evangelism and help open someone’s hard heart to the gospel.

V. Balanced Service

-- Galatians 6:10 -- What does this passage teach us about service?

- The need to prioritize in service; we are called to be the servants of all, but obviously we are limited. We should make sure that our immediate family (1 Timothy 5:8) and the family of faith are being taken care of first. Time and commitment for service to others comes next.

-- Do you need to adjust your priorities to include service more in your life or to balance your service more appropriately?

-- Luke 10:38-42

- What warning about service can we discern in this passage? → Service can take the place of devotion to the Lord. Service should arise out of devotion and relationship with the Lord. We should be careful not to get distracted but always have our gaze fixed on Jesus.

-- How can we keep our service to God balanced with our devotion for God?

Conclusion

-- We encourage FCC members to be actively involved in ministry/service.

-- Questions

-- Can you share examples of service in the church and service outside the church?

-- Are you actively involved in ministry/service?

-- Is there any application to your life to make from this study?

-- Let us be servants in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, serving him by serving others out of thankfulness, love, and faith in the Lord and his promises to his glory, our good, and the good of others!