

TREK 101

Christian

Discipleship

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

By Donald S. Whitney

LESSON 6 SERVING

**“Work hard to show the results of your salvation,
obeying God with deep reverence and fear.”**

Philippians 2:12b (NLT)

A Ministry of Rockpointe Church

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(This Lesson Adapted From Donald Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines For The Christian Life*)

Perhaps no other Spiritual Discipline feel less like a true 'discipline' than the act of "Serving," yet perhaps no other discipline outside of evangelism yields such immediate results either. Serving (others) is a Spiritual Discipline and one that is designed by God to give mightily of yourself in order to "demonstrate" Christ's nature and in turn richly bless others and His Church. Serving others is Christ's calling for every Believer! This lesson is designed to help you reflect on ways God has uniquely designed you to serve those around you for His sole glory and others' benefit.

Donald Whitney quotes Donald Bloesch stating: "*The spiritual disciplines are not to be seen as a pretext for separation and isolation from the world. Rather they should be regarded as a means to conquest over the world. Not the renunciation of the world but service in the world ... this is the purpose of the disciplines of the spirit as seen in the Bible.*"

A. GOD'S DESIGN IN SERVING: Serving God

READ ALOUD: Hebrews 9:14 "*How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*"

1. Serving begins and ends with God. It is a wonderfully powerful idea that God not only created you for service (Eph. 2:10), but that He also redeemed us (bought us back) in order that we might serve God faithfully.

-Before we are commissioned to serve those around us, God created us to serve Him first, to serve at His pleasure, and solely for His glory (1 Samuel 12:24).

-What does it mean to serve God? How can we (finite and puny little humans) actually serve the perfect, infinite God? **Read Acts 17:25**

Pastor John Piper reflects on the verse Joshua 24:15 "*As for me and My house, we will serve the Lord*" stating that to really serve the Lord means to do what he says in a way that makes him look supremely valuable in himself. It means to submit to him in a way that makes him look thrilling.

-How does that idea compare with Deuteronomy 13:4? How can we practically serve the Lord every day?

2. One way in particular, God has designed believers to demonstrate our service to Him through the act of worship (Rom. 12:1-2) and vice versa; our service or ministry to God is worship to Him and we can worship through many avenues of serving. Therefore, as we serve God throughout our day, how many ways can you think of where we can actually “worship” through serving?

-**Read Psalm 100:2** (Compare versions). Notice anything unique about the word worship? Does someone’s translation replace the word “worship” with the word “serve”? Is this intentional? What can that mean from God’s perspective.

-So can an act of serving another actually be both a discipline and an act of worship at the same time? List some examples of how this could be?

-Only until we have a grasp what it means to serve the Lord well, can we begin to explore what it means to serve God by/through serving others.

B. Serving Others

Read aloud Matthew 25:31-46:

-What is God’s perspective on serving others’ needs?

-Can you see how this would be a discipline, something that we should be trained for and practice often?

-How does serving others actually benefit us spiritually?

-If God has indeed created us with service in mind, then have I missed out on many opportunities to bless others and worship God in the process because I have been unwilling to help, to care for, or to serve others’ real needs?

1. God has called His Church to be His hands and feet to deliver the gospel to the lost and needy world (Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 16:9).

See also (Galatians 6:9-10; Psalm 37:3; Ecclesiastes 3:12; Matthew 5:38-48; Luke 6:27-36; 1 Peter 3:8-13; Psalm 34:12-16; 1 Peter 4:19)

2. Part of sharing the gospel effectively is seeing and meeting real needs

around us, in order that we gain a true hearing from those with needs, perhaps allowing them to truly hear the gospel message (James 2:15-17).

3. The Spiritual Discipline of serving is a discipline because God has called us to faithfully share His love with those around us who at times are unapproachable, unloving, undeserving, and hard to love well. Our response both to God and them reflects our true heart in serving (Acts 9:10-18).

- How will you respond to God's call to serve when it is difficult, unsafe, and when you risk much for His glory? The word "discipline" here is not too strong a word to categorize the spiritual help we need to be effective when serving God and others, especially when serving does not come "natural" to us: We are instinctively selfish creatures (Jeremiah 17:9)

C. THE MOTIVATION OF SERVING

READ ALOUD Ephesians 6:7 *"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people"*

1. God desires that we act and live according to our function (Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 25:34; 2 Tim. 1:9); in fact we glorify God most when we live according to His word and our created function. We were created to serve and to live a life completely yielded to God's design and desire. Many people are ultimately unfulfilled because they are living wasted lives, investing only into their happiness and their own needs -while ignoring and rejecting opportunities to serve others.

-God has created us to serve (2 Timothy 1:9). Here belongs the old adage: "You are not saved by your service, but you are saved for service" (1 Cor. 6:19).

-Though we are to serve God first and foremost through worship and ministry to Him, we are called to serve others (Galatians 5:13; Luke 6:31)

2. When we do serve others as God demands, it is not enough simply to "do" service for others with an ungrateful and sulking (grumbling) heart. God requires that we keep a pure heart as we serve, our motivation being to please the Lord first (Colossians 3:23-24; Philippians 2:14).

Read 1 Chronicles 28:9 *"And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever."*

-What does this verse state about true motivation?

-Our Motivation in serving is critical to our success; there can be no

spiritual success without a truly spirit-led effort. If our heart is open and willing to be led by the Spirit to serve others, God can do anything He wants through you.

3. God wants us to serve Him and others with the right motivation which comes from the very seed of man's constitution.

-God gave man a mind (spirit), so that he could **know God**.

-God gave man a heart (emotions), so that he could **love God**.

-God gave man a will (freedom of choice), so that he could **obey God**.

To serve God, we must use all three elements of man's constitution (mind, heart, and will). He does not want a half effort or partial obedience. God will not accept a sacrifice which costs you nothing, such as "empty" obedience (1 Chronicles 21:24; Hosea 6:6; Psalm 51:16). God wants all of us to serve all of Him.

Thus we are called by God to serve and obey God with all of our being - our mind, heart, and will (Proverbs 3:5-6). God wants our motivation in service to be His glory and others' spiritual benefit. We do not serve to glorify or aggrandize our self or our talents or good deeds (Matthew 23:11); rather we serve privately (Matthew 6:3) and with the motivation to bless others that they may see more of Christ in you and through you (1 Peter 4:10)

- A. God requires that our motivation in the discipline of serving be His Glory (Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Because there is no higher aim or purpose than the glory of God, God requires obedience in that we yield to His will and desire that everything we do brings glory to His name.
- B. God requires that our motivation in serving others be Christ's love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).
- C. Donald Whitney adds that a truly blessed heart (that's YOU ☺) will serve from the overflow of Christ's blessings in your life. Thus we are not compelled to serve out of duty primarily, but from a heart of gratitude, gladness (joy), forgiveness (and never guilt), and humility (Psalm 84:10).
- D. The blessing of serving comes through our heart and willingness (intention) of serving more than all that we physically accomplish in

serving. God sees the heart and knows if our motivation is pure or not as we serve others outwardly (1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:10; Matthew 22:18).

- How would you practically define “serving” others?
- How does serving your family differ than serving strangers?

-Be courageous: Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you next steps of obedience in serving someone around you this week.

D. Practical Application in Serving

As we serve God through serving others, remind yourself that you are never more like Christ (which is supposed to be your life goal – Rom. 8:29) than when you serve those around you.

READ ALOUD: Mark 10:45 *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Remember when you serve others:

1. You are reflecting God and His nature and Works to this world:
[Jeremiah 32:36-40 See also Psalm 119:17,65; Psalm 125:1-4; Jeremiah 32:41; Micah 2:7; Zechariah 8:14-15; Acts 10:37-38]
2. We really can never serve well in our “flesh” apart from the Spirit’s help and power. Good works are unnatural for sinful human beings (John 15:5).

[Jeremiah 13:23 See also Psalm 5:9; Psalm 10:7; Psalm 14:1-3; Psalm 53:1-3; Psalm 36:1-4; Psalm 140:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 59:7-8; Jeremiah 4:22; Romans 3:9-18; Romans 7:13-23]
3. God is glorified through pure-hearted service to the world and desires to reward those who serve the needy for His glory.

[Hebrews 13:16 See also 1 Peter 2:20,15; Peter 3:17; John 5:28-29 Luke 6:35; Romans 2:5-11; Galatians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:17-19]
4. Serving others encourages Believers around you and demonstrates that Christ has changed your life.

[Psalm 34:14 See also Psalm 37:27; 2 Timothy 2:20-21; James 2:14-21,26; James 3:13; 1 Peter 3:10-12]

E. The Spiritual Discipline of Serving

In order to become greater servants of God and others, we are to train ourselves to:

- A. Beg God to show us His heart and desire toward serving others. We are to ask the Lord to “give us” His heart and transform how we think about others into how God wants us to see others.
- B. See real needs around us and propel ourselves to move toward meeting those needs.
- C. Pray for sensitivity in our soul that we would be obedient to the Holy Spirit’s voice when He prompts us to action and to serve, especially when it may not make sense to us at first.
- D. Ask God to empower us through His Spirit in order to meet others’ needs effectively.
- E. Help other Believers join in the blessing by serving others’ real needs and Serving others is most effective when we attach our service to the gospel.
- F. Include the gospel in our ministry to others. Serve them best by explaining that your ability and motivation to serve comes from Christ saving you:

We truly are not serving others best when we exclude Christ and His glory and purpose from our ministry to others’ needs. Rather, God has called us to serve well by sharing Truth with those in need so that they may know the true source of Love and Power, Jesus Christ, and that they might know Him as Savior (Mark 9:41).

We are not to be ashamed of Christ. And we perhaps have the very best chance of sharing the gospel and Christ’s story WHEN/AS we serve others. God opens up the opportunity for us to see others’ needs as He is working in others and in a circumstance where the lost and needy can actually SEE the gospel in action.

-Your service to others may actually be the breaking down of the barrier that they have raised up against religion and Christianity; your action to serve them well may actually be the tool or event that may soften a hard heart so that the message of the gospel may penetrate at last and bring one to saving faith in Christ.

-We cannot truly serve one’s greatest needs unless our service is accompanied by the gospel and pointing others to the One who alone can meet all of their needs (Matthew 5:14-16)!

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Make this your prayer today as you strengthen your discipline to serve others: 1 Peter 4:11: “**Whoever serves, [let it be] as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.**”