

Serving in the local church

SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 6: 10(NLT)

¹⁰ *For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers,^[a] as you still do.*

SOME PRACTICAL REASONS FOR SERVING.

1. WE ARE SAVED TO SERVE EPH 2: 10(NLT).

¹⁰ *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

Sometimes in our evangelistic zeal to emphasize that salvation is not *by* works, we fail to fully appreciate that we have been saved *unto* good works (Ephesians 2:10). In fact, God has placed you in this local church in order that you might be edified (built up) so that you might work for and serve Him. To remain sedentary is to neglect God's very purpose for our salvation. By serving, I fulfill the function of God's design in my life and thereby glorify Him.

2. WE HAVE BEEN UNIQUELY GIFTED TO SERVE ROMANS 12: 6; 1 COR 12: 7; EPH 4:16.

⁶ *In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. (NIV)*

⁷ *The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all. (GNT)*

¹⁶ *He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (NLT)*

Several Bible passages help us to understand the concept of spiritual gifts. Among them are Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. In these chapters we learn how God graciously and supernaturally favors each believer with his own distinct ministry gift! What a privilege is ours!

The gifts we receive begin their life of usefulness only after they've been unwrapped.

In a peculiar way, many churches are like Christmas tree. They shelter a number of beautifully wrapped, lovingly purchased presents that remain *unmoved* and *still wrapped*. We believers have been wonderfully gifted by our Lord for service, yet many are content to nestle themselves uselessly beneath the tree.

3. MY SERVICE WILL DEMONSTRATE THE REALITY OF MY FAITH JAMES 2: 14 – 17.

14-17 Dear friends, do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, "Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense? (MSG)

Nobody said it more poignantly than James when he taught us that faith is not primarily about what we know (or have heard), and it's not primarily about what we say. Quite simply, faith without works is dead. Sometimes our faith has zero—or minimal—effect because it is not the real, actionable, demonstrable faith of the Bible. Fake Christianity may temporarily move people, but upon close scrutiny, will have no long lasting influence. *Juice centre in paint shop*

4. THE WORKERS ARE FEW MATHEW 9: 37, 38.

37 He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few.³⁸ So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields." (NLT)

You've heard it before: The Gospels only record one prayer request from our Lord Jesus. "Pray for laborers!" If you are not already involved, somebody somewhere is praying for you to become involved in the ministry. The need is greater than ever. The fields are whiter than ever. Laborers are as relatively few as ever.

A popular business principle is one called the 80/20 principle. Basically it goes like this: typically 20% of the people do 80% of the work. Myriad are the applications to this in the local church: 20% do 80% of the giving, 20% of the people do 80% of the outreach. You get the idea.

I don't know how accurate the percentages are in any particular church. What I *do know* is that I'd like to be in the 20%.

5. CHILDREN TEND TO EMULATE WHAT THEY SEE, NOT WHAT THEY HEAR MARK 3:14.

He climbed a mountain and invited those he wanted with him. They climbed together. He settled on twelve, and designated them apostles. The plan was that they would be with him, and he would send them out to proclaim the Word and give them authority to banish demons. (MSG)

When Jesus selected His apostles, He chose them to be "with Him." How significant. Ministry is more often "caught" than "taught." Perhaps this principle is what motivated Luke to write of all that Jesus began both "to do and to teach." *Teaching* is most effective when *doing* on the part of the teacher precedes it.

Mat 7:28-29 (MSG)

28-29 When Jesus concluded his address, the crowd burst into applause. They had never heard teaching like this. It was apparent that he was living everything he was saying—quite a contrast to their religion teachers! This was the best teaching they had ever heard. (MSG)

6. THE GREAT COMMISSION IS GREAT MATH 28: 19, 20.

19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations,^[a] baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Remember, what Jesus commissioned us to do is what He demonstrated Himself time and again in His personal ministry. Jesus always saw people. In the desperation of their need and in the fragility of their faith, He saw them. Social status, ethnic background, sullied reputation, gender, race, or age—nothing precluded Jesus’ involvement in the lives of others.

Until we contextualize what we do (including the places we go and the jobs we perform) in terms of the gospel, we are missing out on a big part of the reason we’re even here on this planet.

The woman at the well, blind Bartimaeus, and the man by the Pool of Bethesda—they all occupy places on our journey too. Oh, they may have different names and different problems, but they all need Jesus. And we have been commissioned to tell them.

If we are to reach *every creature* with the gospel, then we need *every Christian* to embrace the Great Commission.

7. MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT ENHANCES BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING

1 TIM 4: 16.

15-16 Cultivate these things. Immerse yourself in them. The people will all see you mature right before their eyes! Keep a firm grasp on both your character and your teaching. Don’t be diverted. Just keep at it. Both you and those who hear you will experience salvation. (MSG)

Hermeneutics is the science of Bible interpretation. Obviously the Bible is an important book, and we ought to interpret it in its literal, grammatical, and historical context. Careful attention should be given to the words employed and to the themes surrounding them.

But understanding the Bible also involves a commitment to obey it. Jesus was careful to point this out to His over-educated critics, “*If any man will do his [God’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine...*” (John 7:17) (Darby). As we put the Word of God to practice in our lives, the Lord brings His purposes and His will/Word into focus.

At the wedding in Cana, the participating servants understood Jesus and His ways better than the others in attendance: “*But the servants who drew the water knew*” (John 2:9b). Service to God enhances one’s knowledge of God.

Loosely stated, the Chinese proverb says, “Tell me and I’ll forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I’ll understand.”

Cricket players developed their skills not by theory but over time and in countless game situations on the practice court.

For better understanding of God and His Word, get involved in ministry.

8. SERVICE BECOMES ADORATION WHEN WE DO IT UNTO THE LORD EPH 6:6-8.

⁶ Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. ⁷ Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. ⁸ Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free. (NLT)

Doing anonymous or little-noticed things for the lord is like whispering, “I love you” in his ear.

I’m not a big fan of performance-based Christianity. We don’t *do* in order to measure up. We do *because* we measure up! Already we are accepted by Him. God can’t love you any more than He already does! You are His peculiar treasure, and His thoughts toward you are precious and innumerable.

Here’s how it’s supposed to work. Focus on Him. See the unconditionality of His favor. Rest in His unwavering love. Allow that grace to foster in you a revitalized energy to please Him, serve Him, and love Him. *Contextualize everything you do by the God whom you love. COL 3:16, 17.*

With this mindset, mundane duties became majestic acts of service. Anonymous gifts become yours and God’s little secret. Serving becomes its own reward.

Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;—Ephesians 6:6

Just in case the boss shows up!?”.

For us believers, the boss is always watching. But our motivation is not one of duty or fear. He loves us, and we love Him! What we do is of inestimable value because He orders us to it, energizes us in it, and rewards us for it!

9. WE WILL BUILD LONG-LASTING AND VALUABLE FRIENDSHIPS ROMANS 16

One of the major fringe benefits of working for the Lord is the culturing of genuine friendships. Those to whom we feel the closest in life are typically those with whom we work. Adam and Eve began their marriage side by side, working together—him the garden worker and she his helper. The close connection we have with our coworkers often surpasses even that which we share with our own neighbors.

Some chapters of the Bible are more difficult to read than others. One of them is Romans 16, mainly because some of the names are impossible to pronounce! But what a tender passage it is. Paul takes time to assign value to his coworkers in ministry. Read it. Sense his heart.

Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas, Aquila and Priscilla, Peter and John—and the partnerships go on. With fondness I remember those with whom I conducted ministry way back in college, and then as a young man in various places.

Ministry partners are the best lifetime friends and great sources of encouragement.

10. WE WILL STAND BEFORE THE LORD 2COR 5:10.

¹⁰ For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. (NLT)

He loves me. He died for me. He has given me purpose. Only what's done for Him matters. I will meet Him face to face. Someday, maybe today.

Involvement in ministry is a life of service for Jesus, like Jesus, and with Jesus. In fact, it's all about Jesus. Now if that doesn't incentivize service, I don't know what will!