
Servolution

Welcome to a month of daily readings on serving. I pray you will be encouraged and blessed as you explore what God's word says about serving as a part of his church.

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Introduction: May 1 – 2

Monday, May 1: God's example.

Read John 3:13-18; Mark 10:35-45

God has done the greatest service for mankind. *"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 10:45 NASB). In the greatest love story ever told, God came down to the level of humankind. He did this to serve, by giving us his life, so we could be saved. In Mark 10, James and John try to secure high positions of worldly greatness, but their idea of greatness is the opposite of what is truly great in God's eyes. Jesus attempts to correct their view (Mark 10:43, 44) but there are many more lessons they need to learn before they really understand what Jesus is saying. In our current culture, there are many who desire self-exaltation, and will do all sorts of things to achieve this.

- Can you think of a time when you were selfish like James and John, and a time when you served selflessly like Jesus?
 - Do you desire to follow in Jesus' footsteps, and serve others?
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Tuesday, May 2: Monkey see, monkey do.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:18; Matthew 6:19-24

"By beholding we become changed" (2 Cor 3:18). My almost 2-year-old daughter is beginning to parrot things we say. She may not understand what she is saying or what she is doing when copying, but either way she is slowly learning. It's really cute when she does this and it shows how children mimic us and end up doing what we do, whether good or bad. Learning to serve does not come naturally, and is learnt over time; but Jesus the master servant has given the example for us to follow. If the eye is clear or focussed on what is good, then the body is full of light (Matthew 6:22). If our focus is only on Jesus, then we will mimic only him. If we sit at Satan's feet and indulge our senses in immoral TV programs, movies and the like, we will mimic what we see. If we are not beholding Jesus and his life through the bible and Christian media, how do we think we can mimic Him or become changed to do something positive? God wants our eyes to be clear, by being fixed on him so we can live like him. By doing this, he can empower us to live a life that is worthy of being called Christian.

- What are you focussing on today?
 - Have you chosen to follow Jesus, or are you focussing on the things of this world that are going to perish?
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Section 1: Serving at Home: May 3-6

Wednesday, May 3: It begins here.

Read Psalms 127:1–2, Hebrews 3:1-8 and
Joshua 24:14-24

I have heard it said that “Home is where the heart is.” If our heart is there then when we invite someone into our home, we are sharing our heart with them. What we do in our home will flow through into everything else we do. In Joshua 24:15, Joshua makes the statement “As for me and my house, we will serve the lord.” this was amidst a rebuke to the Israelites for following after false gods. He was challenging them to make a stand and truly commit their households to follow the true God.

- What are you building your home for, and are you building it alone?
 - What influence would you like your household to have on others?
 - Are you willing to share your heart with others by inviting them home?
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Thursday, May 4: Serving within the family unit

Read Ephesians 5:22-30,
Colossians 3:18–21; Gen 1:28

The family unit was the first institution written in the bible. (Genesis 1:28). Here, God said “be fruitful and multiply.” This shows that family is important. More than this it also shows a home community is important. The text says male and female were both created equal in the image of God, but they had differing roles. Just the same we are all equals, but have differing abilities and roles. Serving at home includes understanding the role of each member of the family unit and enabling them to serve in a greater degree.

- What role do you have to play in serving in your family?
- How can you encourage and work with each other to complement each other's abilities and roles?

If you aren't currently in a family unit of some sort, consider the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:32-35. I must say that before I was in a relationship with my wife, I had a great deal more time to spend with God. Those who are without family members in their household, have a great opportunity to focus their attention to God, and find more opportunities to serve others.

- What is the focus of your attention? Is it building you up spiritually, or separating you from God?
 - What is keeping you from giving your undivided attention to God?
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Friday, May 5: Church in the home.

Read Colossians 4:15, Philemon 1:1-7,
Hebrews 1:13, 14 and Matthew 18:19,20

Imagine hosting a small church in your home, especially if it gained the attention and prayers of a great evangelist like Paul. Well every time you hold a prayer meeting or small group you essentially are a church in your home. And more than this, whenever you are gathered together, you attract the attention of someone greater than Paul (Jesus and the angels themselves). Some of the greatest times of spiritual refreshment for me has been in small prayer groups and study groups. There is power in the gathering, and the home is a great place for it.

- What kind spiritual service can you open your home up to?

- If you cannot open your home up to others, would you like to join others in their homes to take part in their spiritual service?

Here are some links to get you started.

<http://cccc.org.au/ministries/small-groups/> and <http://cccc.org.au/contact-us/>

Sabbath, May 6. Communion at home.

Hebrews 13:2; Luke 24:13-35

What a great privilege it would have been to listen to Jesus explain the scriptures on that road to Emmaus. But what a terrible loss it would have been if they did not urge Jesus to come in and eat with them. I believe Luke only mentioned Simon in the story, because the other disciple is you. You have the great opportunity to invite Jesus in, to commune with you and those in your house. The Disciples often broke bread when they met together in each other's houses, and in so doing, they remembered Jesus and his great sacrifice. Wouldn't it be wonderful to remember Jesus and proclaim his death through the breaking of bread?

- Would you like to open your house and feed others?
- Do you think you could reveal Jesus to others by eating with them?

Week 1 Small Group study: Boundaries

Effective personal boundaries are necessary for healthy living and are a natural part of life. They define what a person is and is not responsible for, and where his/her space begins and ends. Service is not like operating a machine or driving, where the boundaries are clearly written for all to abide by, and policed at the same time. Serving includes human relationships with a variety of characters, problems and expectations. This causes boundaries to seem somewhat fuzzy and subjective at times, making it harder to define a clear position. Nonetheless, it is important for boundaries in service/ministry to be well defined yet flexible, so you have a clear standpoint, and can adapt to the immediate circumstance.

- **Identity Boundary**

Read Luke 4:22. Did Jesus let others view of him determine who he really was?

- Who are you?
- Should you let other people determine who you are?

- **Personal Boundaries**

Personal space and time can be impeded on to the point where you feel like you have no more autonomy separate from what others demand. If you have no boundaries in place, you may end up forming unhealthy reactive boundaries, like erecting walls between yourself and those you minister to. In the book *Understanding God-Honouring Boundaries in Ministry*, Barney Self writes: *"By being able to say "no" we can be in much closer proximity to others because we do not have to fear being controlled by them. If we cannot say "no" then we have to maintain a greater distance from others for safety."*

It may seem hard for you to say no, because you fear what the person asking might think of you.

- How does understanding your true identity change your ability to say no when required?

Read Matthew 5:33-37.

- What can you do to make sure you are not going to commit to something you cannot fulfill?

In Jesus' time, Roman authorities and soldiers could legally order people to help them to carry their stuff for a specified distance.

- How does this change your understanding of Matthew 5:41?

Read Mark 6:31–32. Jesus saw the need to get away and be refreshed. This may not have been successful every time, but the principle is none the less present. We all need rest time to be refreshed.

- What are you doing to set aside time so you can serve more effectively?

Read Mark 6:33, 34.

- When the boundary was crossed by others, what was the driving principle that allowed Jesus to continue serving?
- How does 2 Co 9:7 apply to boundary crossing in the last situation?

- **Family Boundaries**

Parents responsibilities to family are primary over responsibility to others. If you place priority on the others over your family, you essentially become married to others and they become your family. There is little problem in this if you do not have a family unit to be responsible for. Keeping family as a primary responsibility doesn't mean that more time must be made for the family, but time for the family must be guarded as a higher priority. If this does not happen, the family system will break down, and in doing so, ministry integrity and influence will suffer.

- How can you protect the family system?
- Can you schedule family appointments in the diary so clear reason can be given to reject things that impinge on family time?
- Sometimes the church expects family members to work in ministry, even in areas where they are not gifted in. How do you guard against these pressures so they do not end up resenting being part of a minister's family, and causing undue tension?

Case study: Jim is married with five and seven-year-old sons. He is busy working 40 to 50 hours per week, and often mows the lawn for Marg, an old lady living the other side of town. She is a widow who is very grateful for his help. But the last two times Jim mowed her lawn, he had also promised to spend that time with his sons.

- How do you think his sons felt?
- What can Jim do to rectify the situation? His children are too young to help, but he does have friends at church.

Additional resources.

Although these webpages are written for people in pastoral ministry, the principles apply to all who serve others.

<http://www.soulshpherd.org/1998/07/jesus-set-boundaries/>

<http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Understanding-God-honoring-boundaries-in-ministry>

http://desperatepreacher.com/pastorcare/boundaries_in_ministry.htm