
Servolution

Section 3: Serving the Community: May 15-24.

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10). NASB.

Introduction: The human body is not designed to simply be an organism that survives, it has been designed to do things external to itself. Last week the readings focussed on how the church body is to work together in unity, so it is fit and healthy. This week we will explore how the body is to function externally and do the job God has given it.

Monday, May 15: Other people are important.

Rom 5:6-10, Matt 10:29-31,
Luke 19:1-10, Mark 2:13-17,
Acts 11:1-18

Jesus spent time eating with sinners. This may not seem strange to us today, but eating with someone in the Jewish culture was an expression of intimate friendship. In his great love for humanity, Jesus didn't turn anyone away who realised their need for him. If we remember the great love God has for humanity, and the great price he paid for our salvation, then we can begin to understand the importance of the community to God. If Jesus is our example, we need to take notice of what he did, and copy it. We need to seek those who are lost in the community, so we can demonstrate God's love to them.

- Do you have a love for those who don't know Jesus?
- What opportunities do you know about, where you can show Gods love to the lost?

Tuesday, May 16. Serving brings faith alive.

James 2 14-26; Matthew 14:22-33

Sometimes we can be afraid of the unknown, and if you have not had the experience of serving the community, the idea of helping strangers can be daunting. But James has some counsel to help us realize that we need to put our faith to the test to make it grow. In his example of Abraham obeying God, James shows us that Abrahams faith was completed or made perfect by his actions. By sitting in our comfort zones we won't be able to exercise our faith. Peter got an experience of a lifetime because he stepped out and trusted Jesus (at least for a time). Just like a body builder needs to work out to get big, we need to step out of our comfort zones and into the community. By doing this, you will be amazed as you watch God work around you and through you like you have never seen before. Just keep your eyes set on Jesus, and you will be fine.

- Is your faith lacking? Do you need to exercise it?
- To help you grow, do you know anyone who is serving in the community that you can assist?

Just in case you are troubled by the account in James 2:21 where Abraham offers his son Isaac on the altar, God did not allow Abraham to kill his son, but asked him to do this as a test to show his trust in God. It also pointed to what God did around 2000 years later, when he offered his son Jesus, for us. For the original story, read Genesis 22:1-18.

Wednesday, May 17: Love for the community.

Luke 10:25-37, Acts 9:36-42,
John 3:14-17

God wants us to love our neighbour as we already love ourselves. But what if you hate yourself? It's hard demonstrate God's love to others while you hate yourself. And on the flipside, we can't come to the conclusion that we are to love ourselves in the selfish sense, because we cannot love others as ourselves and be selfish at the same time. I can't put myself first and help an elderly person carry their shopping at the same time. The love described here comes from a proper understanding of how God sees you and loves you. God loves the sinner but hates the sin. God loves you enough to send his son to suffer and die to *take away* your sin. When you realise that you are *not* your sin and faults, but you are a child of God, then you find you have a great deal of self-worth. Then you can learn to love yourself because you are not your failings. This self-worth can then be viewed in others, as they are also children of God. This is where I help the elderly because I see intrinsic/inherent value in them.

Jesus died to take our sins away so we are left with the valuable bit, ourselves. Everyone has a great deal of value in God's eyes, and he wants us to see others as he sees us, with a great deal of love.

- Have you struggled with your self-worth?
- Would you like to read about Jesus last days and death more so you can see the value he places on you?
- Do you want to show others that they have value through serving them?

Thursday, May 18: Serving with those from outside the local church body. Luke 9:46-56,
Mark 9:35-50

Luke 9:46-56 gives a clear message of humbly serving while interacting with other Christian denominations respectfully. In the beginning of this passage Jesus gives the Disciples a lesson in humility. Then John reveals the disciples pride by telling Jesus they tried to stop others who were not of their group from using Jesus name. Jesus then rebukes them by saying whoever is not against him is with him. This gives the lesson that if a certain Christian is not a part of our local church body, yet is serving in the local community, we should rejoice because there is another laborer in the field. We should not be jealous or envious because the people other Christians are reaching may go to a different church. Instead we should rejoice that someone else has found God.

But Luke does not stop there in his gospel. He adds directly to the context by showing a situation where when rejected themselves, they were not to despise the rejecters but move on to the next

town. In the same way we are not to be spiteful to another denomination because they reject us and our message. But we are to press on toward the goal of serving, wherever Jesus leads.

- Have you had your pride get in the way of working for the good with others?
- Can you think of someone who is a Christian outside of your local church body that you can affirm and thank for serving God?

Friday, May 19: Serve with no strings attached.

Matthew 10:40-42, Matthew 13:1-23,
James 1:27, James 2:1-13

After filling up at a servo in Victoria, I went in to pay, and noticed the attendant at the counter had a really down and out looking countenance. In seeing this I had compassion on the lady, but I didn't know what I could do. So I smiled with compassion while thanking her for her service, then simply said "I hope you are able to have a nice night". At that, her face transformed before me like a ton of depressing weight just fell off her back. This was a simple God moment where someone cared, and this made an impact on the lady. Who knows what eternal impact this will have. God desires that his seeds of love be planted everywhere. He would rather the ground be tilled and productive, but this should not stop his seed being spread to all people. Everyone is to have the opportunity to be shown God's love, whether they are rich or poor, popular or unpopular, outcast or famous. Outside of obvious practical restraints, we shouldn't decide who can be served, even with the simplest service.

I didn't have the opportunity to let this lady know where the compassion for her was from, but if we have the opportunity, we should not restrain from expressing that the service was because of the love of God. And if we cannot proclaim God's name, don't forget we are already doing it with our actions.

- Have you avoided those who seem hard to love while serving?
- Have you taken the glory for your abilities and works of service?
- How can you be more mindful of the fact that good things in the end really only come from God?

Sabbath, May 20: Prepare for warfare.

Joshua 1:1-9, Ephesians 6:10-20,
1 Peter 3:15

When we are serving the community, we are engaging in warfare against the selfish principles of Satan's kingdom. By serving with no strings attached, we are being a witness of the love of God to these people. This will inevitably cause Satan to try his best to hinder our efforts. Because of this, we need to be equipped with the right gear as described in Ephesians 6:13-18, to go out into battle.

But the right gear is no good to us unless we have a leader. Joshua 1:1-9 gives us a hint of who should lead us. The Hebrew word for Joshua is the same word that is translated into the Greek *lēsous* and then into the English Jesus. So both Joshua and Jesus have the same Hebrew root word, which means "rescues" or "deliverer". We have nothing to fear when Jesus is leading us. God made Joshua victorious in leading his people into the promised land. If the strong and courageous Jesus has delivered us from sin, then he will lead us victoriously in conquering Satan.

- Are you trying to fight in your own strength? Or are you relying on the power of God?
- Are you following your own desires, or following God's leading?

- How can you be more mindful of listening to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit?
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Sunday, May 21: Praying and serving together.

Acts 4:23-31, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12,
John 16:23-28, Judges 15:1-17

Prayer can't be emphasised enough, but if we only pray alone we are like a one-man army. Sampson shows us how effective a one-man army could be. Yes, he was a mighty man when filled with the Spirit, but he was hardly as effective as an army. Worse than this, I would dare say that he was led away by his carnal desires because he had no one to hold him accountable. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, that when we work together there is more strength and security. In the accounts of the Holy Spirit being poured out in the early church, all accounts I know of are found in the context of communal prayer.

In Matthew 10:8, Jesus says *"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give"* NASB. Hmm, you might say what does Jesus think I am? Well I have taken this verse out of context, but it still rings true to what is possible when we come together and pray. John 16:23-28 says to ask the Father in Jesus name, and he will give what we ask. In the Greek, every time Jesus says "you" in this passage, it is a plural. There is power in numbers and unity of prayer. Jesus wants to come together to pray, so we may become unified and work together as each part of a body does. Then when we go out to serve the community we can go out with confidence that others have our backs.

- Have you freely received? It is because you have not asked?
 - I keep hearing "if you aim for nothing, then that's what you will hit." What are you aiming for? Are you limiting God?
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Monday, May 22: Unity in diversity.

Ephesians 4:1-16, Acts 15:36-41,
Acts 4:36, 2 Timothy 4:11

Sometimes believers can have disagreements about the best way to serve the community. Even Paul and Barnabas, a couple of the best evangelists in the bible did. But we need to realise there is more than one way to skin a cat. Each one has an approach that can work in multiple situations, but this should not cause disunity among believers. We should be unified in the purpose of demonstrating the love of God to the world, because people matter. But the way and means each person is able to serve, is as varied as the colours and shapes of the clothes we wear. In the situation of Paul and Barnabas, they didn't persecute each other, nor is there evidence that this alienated them from each other, but they stood to their convictions which were in line with their spiritual gifts and callings. Barnabas, who was called the son of encouragement (Acts 4:36), was patiently mentoring Mark who had faltered in the past, and Paul did not have the time or gifts to work with Mark. So Paul goes his way and Barnabas his. But the story does not stop there, years later we see that Barnabas' mentoring has paid off, because Paul now asks for Mark to join him because of his usefulness in ministry.

- Have you written someone off because they weren't able to help in the capacity you expected?
- Can you think of someone who needs some encouragement and mentoring to fulfil their potential?
- Is there someone you can pray with and for, to assist in building unity of the body?

Tuesday, May 23: Burning your enemy.

Romans 12:14-21, Numbers 16:41-50,
Isaiah 6:1-7, Rev 3:14-22

In the Bible there is a theme of fire that either destroys or purifies. In the context of Paul talking about pouring fire over the head of an enemy, he is saying to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:20-21). He isn't saying that when we do good we are somehow getting back at our enemies. Instead, we are destroying the work of Satan when we demonstrate the love of God to others. In the end we are either refined with the fire of the Holy Spirit, or are destroyed with the fire that will destroy sin at the end of time. Because we love our enemies and hate their sin, we hope the fire destroys the works of Satan in this life.

- What do you think of your enemies?
- Do you have the desire to see those who are against you saved?
- If you find it hard to love your enemy, will you take the time to ask God for the spirit of forgiveness and love for them?

Wednesday, May 24: Persecution and perseverance.

2 Corinthians 4:7-18, 2 Timothy 3:12,
Psalms 118:5-11, 2 Corinthians 4:7-18,
Matthew 10:25:28

We need to persevere with those God has entrusted us to serve, because in due season we will reap. There is a balance between persevering and moving on that only God knows how to keep. When dealing with persecution it is rare that God desires us to stay and remain being persecuted. Unless God has clearly shown you that you are to stay in a life endangering situation, there is no real point in staying there. A dead servant can't do much serving. If your time is being used in an abusive or spiritually draining situation, there are many other people in the community, God wants you to serve.

If we have placed our trust in God rather than man, there is nothing for us to fear (Psalms 118:6). If God has called you to be in a situation where you are persecuted, remember what Jesus gave for you and what will be your reward in the end, eternal life.

- Where has God called you to persevere and serve?
 - What situations are you in that are causing your spiritual life to suffer?
 - Have you spent time in prayer to ensure you are serving in where God wants you to?
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Week 3 Group study: Witnessing styles.

In my late teens I owned an 80cc motocross bike. It had a lot less power than my friends bigger 125 and 250cc motocross bikes. I was slower than most of them on the more open tracks, but when it came to the tight cornered motocross track at my parent's farm, no one could catch me. I rarely crashed on the motocross track because tight repetitive tracks were what I was naturally good at. But I had some big stacks on the more open tracks and while riding bigger bikes, because my natural talent was not for that environment. This study is different than the spiritual gifts survey, in that it looks more at our natural evangelistic approach. Rather than the spiritual gifts for primarily serving the Church body, It's to find out which way you are naturally geared to evangelise others. But you might say, I just want to plant seeds by serving and leave it at that; I just serve with no ulterior motive. I ask you, what do you think of the man who has a fling with some girl with the intention that he is just planting some seed? What if he never intended to take on the responsibility of raising the child he has just done the deed in producing? Of course others can come to the aid, and it takes a village to raise a child, but we also need to be responsible Christians and exercise our faith in reaching others.

Read: **Luke 19:11-27.**

Take note of verse 11. This gives the context for the parable. At this time, the close followers of Jesus fully expected to become rulers over the earthly cities when Jesus became king. But they had misunderstood his mission. Here Jesus gives a parable to correct their views (even though they don't get it straight away). This parable is also different to the other parables like it, which all talk about growing one's spiritual gifts.

- The coins represent the Gospel message. While reading this parable, discuss its significance in light of the coin given to each person, representing the Gospel.

As Satan traded his lies throughout the universe and thus multiplied them (Ezekiel 28:16), so we are to multiply the gospel message through others hearing and believing (Verse 13, 15).

- Discuss what you think about the condemnation given to the servant who hid his coin (Verse 20-26).
- Is there a difference between the end of the worthless servant of in verse 22 and the enemies of verse 27?

This parable may seem harsh, but the reality is that we know where to get the cure for the most dreadful disease the universe has ever known (sin). And it is a terrible thing if we don't let others know where to get the cure. This is serving at the core. We serve because we love, and if we love someone then we care about their eternal destiny.

We all have natural ways of serving and engaging people in evangelism. None are better than others, but some fit better than others. The popular public evangelist gets a lot of attention but if all were public evangelists then not many people would be reached. The following approaches are adapted out of Bill Hybels and Mark Mittleberg's book, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*.

- While reading the following passages and reflect on what type of person you think you are most like and the approach that suits you most in the examples given.
- Try to think of someone else who fits each approach well, then affirm those people and see if you can encourage them to see the usefulness of their talents in evangelism.

The direct approach: Read Matthew 16:15 and skim through Acts 2:14-36. Here Peter was bold and direct. Discuss other situations you recall Peter showing this character. Some people need this in-your-face kind of preaching to get them to wake up and make a change for the better.

The intellectual approach: Read Acts 17:1-4, and skim through 22-34. Paul's approach is calculated and intellectual. He was well educated and his style suited the intellectuals at Athens. Many atheists amongst others need this type of evangelism, because they think they have many logical boundaries to jump before believing the Gospel. Do you think Peter's direct approach would have worked in Athens?

Testimonial approach: Read John 9:3-8, 24-33. This man did not argue theology like Paul, and even sidestepped confrontation unlike Peter, instead he stated his simple yet powerful testimony. This kind of evangelism is powerful and well suited to a new Christian, but definitely not restricted to one. If you don't have a drugs and gangs to God kind of testimony, don't fret, it's not all about what God brought you from, but the freedom and peace he is giving you right now.

Interpersonal approach: Read Luke 5:27-32. Matthew put on a big social gathering for all his tax collecting mates to come and interact with Jesus. Matthew gave no confrontation or theological dissertation, instead he built on his current relationships and grabbed hold of the opportunity to develop them while at the same time introducing them to his friend Jesus. This is one of the most effective types of evangelism, and one we see Jesus doing a lot.

Invitational approach: Read John 4:25-30, 39-42. The Samaritan woman was amazed with Jesus words and prophesying. When she realises who she had met, she went and told others and called them to see and hear him for themselves. It's often a lot easier to invite someone to an outreach event if the other approaches aren't your style. And you would be surprised how many of your friends would actually attend an event if they were invited. Do you know what events your church has planned in the near future?

Service approach: Acts 9:36, 39. Tabitha was well known because of her acts of love and help for the poor. She was likely unassuming yet well known. This kind of evangelism can be a good fit for the quiet type of person, and those good with their hands (although definitely not restricted to them). Jesus took this approach a lot. It is also an important approach because there are many who won't care for what you know, until they know you care. What natural talents or hobbies do you have that can be used in serving others?

You have been created unique and have developed certain skills and character that can be used to serve others. It's up to you to decide if you want God to put them to his use.