
Servolution

Section 2: Serving the body of Christ: May 7-14.

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Galatians 5:13 (NASB)

Sunday, May 7: The power to serve the body.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-11,
John 15:1-11 & 1 John 4:7-5:4.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:1 *“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”* (NASB). I must say that when children go nuts with percussion instruments, it can become quite irritating. It can be the same with those who are part of the church but don't treat others with love. John writes in 1 John 4:20, *“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen”* (NASB). In this context a “brother” is a fellow believer. Loving those who love you isn't really that hard, until they are in need. Then it can become really inconvenient to show your love. And if this is the case (unless it means you actually neglect others to serve this person), you may not have the love required to serve and be a part of the church. But God isn't expecting us to do the impossible. The clue for victory over selfishness and the power to love is revealed in 1 John 5:4. *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”* It is our faith that allows us to be born again. To have faith in God, is to have complete trust in him. To be born again is to be filled with the Spirit of God, so God overcomes our sinfulness like light filling a dark place.

- Do you desire to be able to love others in the church family?
- Do you want to express God's love by serving others in the church family; even if it can be inconvenient at times?

If you have not experienced the new birth, I invite you to get in contact with John Sanburg (whose contact details are found at <http://cccc.org.au/contact-us/>) and ask for more information.

Monday, May 8: What is the church body?

Read Acts 9:1–5, 1 Peter 2:1–5.
Romans 12:1–5 & Ephesians 1:18–23.

How was Paul persecuting Jesus in Acts 9:1-5? By persecuting Jesus' followers, who are a part of Jesus' church, Paul was persecuting Jesus. This shows us that Jesus is connected intimately with his church. Some images used in the bible to describe the Church are a vine, bride, family, temple and a body. The Bride imagery shows us the love and connection Jesus has for the church like a groom has for his bride. The family imagery shows the unity and closeness that should be found

between the members of the church. The temple and body imagery describes the union that should exist between each member of the church with Christ as the foundation and head. With the temple imagery of 1 Peter 2:1-5, we are living bricks that are fitted together to make the whole. A brick by itself is neither set on the foundation nor a temple on its own, thus there must be unity of purpose and cooperation between us.

In Romans 12:1–5 and Ephesians 1:18–23, the body imagery gives a strong theme of unity while remaining an individual. Each unique person is part of the church, just as the body has many unique parts. But as a whole, the body must work together, otherwise it will be somewhat disabled. In concluding: There are two necessary aspects of being part of the body. Connection to the head, who is Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. And connection with each other through love, which is made evident through service to each other. The key thing to remember is that the unifying power of the body comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As God himself is not divided, so we cannot be divided if God dwells in us.

- If you don't see unity in the church, what do you think can be done to enable us all to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

**Tuesday, May 9: Why serve the body?
Part 1: Glorify God.**

Read Acts 12; Romans 15:5-6 &
Philippians 1:3-11

In Acts 12:1, Luke records *“Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.”* This might seem like a normal thing for a roman ruler to do, but King Herod pretended to be a Jew in order to gain the favour of the Jews. At this time king Herod was ruling over all Judea, Samaria, Galilee, the Transjordan, and the Decapolis. This is virtually everywhere the Jewish nation had ruled up to that time, making Herod a true King of the Jews. But he went too far by accepting worship that was only due Jesus the true king of the Jews. Acts 12:22-23 *The people kept crying out, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died (NASB).* He should have known better, but instead he accepted the worship due to the true King of the Jews, Jesus; whose followers he was persecuting. Here God is showing that no matter what position we hold, all good things come from God, and we have no part in accepting worship or glory that is due Him.

Despite persecution from Herod, the pseudo Jew, “the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.” Acts 12:24 (NASB). Whatever persecution happens, when the church is faithful in what God has asked it to do, all glory will go to God and it will continue to conquer.

- Is it possible to act like you are serving God while actually serving yourself?
- Have you sought glory when you should have given it to God?
- God will not be stopped. Don't you want to get on board and glorify him through serving?

**Wednesday, May 10. Why serve the body?
Part 2. Edify (Build up) the body**

Read Hebrews 10:19-25, Romans 15:1-6
Ephesians 4:11-16 & Romans 12:9–13

In Hebrews 10:24, 25, Paul encourages the believers to come together, and to think of ways they can motivate each other, to love and do good deeds. He says we should do this especially as we see the second coming of Jesus drawing near. There have been many signs of the nearness of his return in the past, but nothing like what we see is happening today. So there is reason for the body to come together to build each up and seek God more than ever before. There are some members of the church who are spiritually strong, and have their lives in order. These have the

responsibility to help those who are struggling (Romans 15:1). This can be of physical means, but it is more importantly of spiritual means. We can't neglect the physical needs of our church family, but serving to supply the spiritual needs is what matters for eternity. To minister to spiritual needs and building up the church, Paul gives the counsel that God has given various gifts to each one (Ephesians 4:11-12). I don't believe Paul has listed every gift, but only the prominent ones. He also lists ways of building up the body in Romans 12:9-13.

There are most likely gifts you do not realize you have, and some you have not had the chance to exercise yet.

- Can you think of what gifts God has given to you?
- How do you think you can use them to build up and strengthen the church?

If you are not taking part in this week's group study, you can learn about your spiritual gifts in the group study section at the bottom of this week's readings.

**Thursday, May 11: Why serve the body?
Part 3: Self-development**

Read James 2:14-26; Ephesians 6:5-9,
Luke 6:38, Mark 10:29-31
1 Peter 4:10-11 & Romans 12:6-8.

One of the reasons we are to serve, is to bless ourselves. This may come across a bit selfish, but when we serve others we grow ourselves. So in giving we receive, we receive joy and spiritual development (James 2:22). For example, if you just sit on the couch and feed yourself all day without exercise, you will get fat and unhealthy. But if you eat the same amount and exercise, then you get healthy and strong. It is the same with our spiritual lives. We need to eat spiritually, yet we also need to exercise our faith through interaction and service to others.

As Jesus said love your neighbour as yourself, we need to use our gifts to serve others. But if we are not careful, we can serve to our detriment. Paul, in Romans 12:6-8 says God has given us specific gifts for a reason, because we are to serve in the capacity *he* has given, for the benefit of others. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says to serve in the strength God supplies, if we serve outside of what God has given, we can burn out and become ineffective.

- Are you missing out on blessings because you are not sharing what God has given you?
- How can you make sure you are not just sitting on the selfish couch?
- Where can you serve the church if you are not already doing so?

Friday, May 12: Ordinances to equip the body for service.

Read John 13:1-20
Luke 22:14-30.

Imagine having your feet washed by God. Just let that sink in for a minute. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords is humble and loving enough to wash your feet like a servant. He is also willing to do whatever it takes to cleanse us from all sin; as symbolised by washing the disciple's feet. And Jesus did do whatever it would take, by dying on the cross for our sin. Jesus said in John 13:16, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him."* (NASB). If the king of heaven can humble himself to the point of giving himself for us, then we should do the same for him. The ordinance/ritual of foot washing is given to help us remember who our master is, and is a practical reminder that we should serve each other in humility.

Communion, or the Lords supper, is a memorial that Jesus gave himself to save us. By partaking in the bread we are symbolically partaking in the church body of Christ (Luke 22:19). We are to remember that we are one body, who are to continue serving as Jesus did.

By partaking in the wine/juice, we are to remember the covenant or agreement Jesus has made with us. The agreement that he died and shed his blood for our sins, so we can now be free from being condemned to death (Luke 22:20). We can now accept his perfect record in place of our sinful one.

This solemn celebration of the Lords supper is powerful when we meditate on these passages and the great sacrifice Jesus made.

- Would you like to take part in the practice of foot washing? As strange as it sounds, it's not really that bad, and helps with humility.
- Would you like to take part in the lord's supper? It's a great way to remember we are all to be united in purpose. If you are already a member of the church, partaking of the wine is a great way to renew the covenant you made at baptism.

Sabbath, May 13: Serving the body through prayer

Romans 12:9-13 Ephesians 6:18-20,
Colossians 4:2-4, Acts 12:1-17
& James 5:13-18

Of all the great character traits listed in Romans 12:9-13 devotion to prayer is one that we need more than ever today. How often have you spent half an hour or more physically helping someone, but never spent more than a quick mention in prayer for them, if at all. Ephesians 6:18-20 and Colossians 4:2-4 urges us to serve the church body through prayer.

When Peter was put in prison ready for execution, the church was fervently praying for him (Acts 12:5). This was possibly because James the brother of John had recently been put to death and they did not want this to happen again. Sometimes we don't realise how dire a situation is and prayer is offered up too little and too late.

But this time the church was petitioning God with their all and an angel is sent to release Peter. Is fervently petitioning God all that is necessary to be heard? There was at least one group who were petitioning God all through the night. But more than just a prayer group is required. Its what's in the heart. James 5:16 says the prayer of a righteous person is powerful. To be right with God is to humbly confess our sin after we have forgiven others. And the prayer must be of faith (James 5:15).

- Do you desire to serve the church through prayer?

If you humble yourself enough to forgive others and you are forgiven by God, then you are going to be to be heard by God. Then if you pray with faith, believing you have received, your prayer will be effective; as long as it is in line with the will of God.

- How can you be proactive in praying for the body of Christ?
- What changes can you make to give yourself time for prayer?

Sunday, May 14: Serving through tithes and offerings.

Read John 3:16, Romans 6:23,
Psalm 24:1-6, Malachi 3:8-12,
James 5:1-6, Matthew 23:23-24
& Genesis 14:17-24

There was a costly sacrifice given for us to be saved (John 3:16), so it only seems right to give something in return. The earth is the lords and everything in it (Psalm 24:1). Returning a tenth of our income (tithe) to God is for the purpose of serving the ministers who serve the body. God

challenges us to test him with tithing, and he promises in Malachi 3:10 that he will pour out blessings on us if we are faithful.

Some of us don't have much time to serve physically, but are blessed in abundance financially. "It's all gunna burn," is what an opal miner used to tell me. What's the point of hoarding wealth in this life, rather than using it to bless others? (James 5:1-6). One day it will all disappear and we will see what our investments have come to. We have the opportunity to give offerings, that will enable the local church to serve the local community.

If you would like to return to God some of what is his, check out the E-giving website link below to see all the things you can give to. By giving you will help the church to serve the world, yourself and your community.

<https://egiving.org.au/>

Week 2 Group study: Where do I fit? Exploring your spiritual gifts.

(Please read and gather resources before meeting together)

1 Peter 4:10-11. As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. NASB.

If you have received a package in the mail or a present you would know it is useless, unless the package is opened and used. Every born-again Christian, has been given gifts to use for the Glory of God and the edification of the church. We need to figure out what gifts God has given us, so we can put them to use. On the flipside, taking on a role you are not gifted in, will cause undue anxiety and waste time. Sometimes a need will arise and no one will be able to fulfil a role. If you are not competent enough or unable to fulfil the time demands of this given role, then it must be left undone; otherwise you can easily neglect your main and God given duties.

The link below is for a spiritual gifts survey. The small group leader should download the pdf and print out enough surveys for each member of the group. Read the directions at the top and after conducting the survey, discuss the questions at the end, and where you think you can use your giftset.

https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwi2yoKOttfTAhUHFpQKHe--C4cQFgg8MAM&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.lifeway.com%2Ffwc%2Ffiles%2Ffwcf_pdf_discover_your_spiritual_gifts.pdf&usq=AFQjCNGeCS1pQacJ3M54GXthhA4Dzp1-Tg&sig2=4tD7NI-8F1DXezPcnTr-tg

Other good online resources are:

<http://giftstest.com/test>

<http://giftstest.com/allgifts>

Boundaries within giftedness

Sometimes it is easy to get bogged down in the 'now' of serving, but we need to take care of ourselves and be wise in what we do. We need to be realistic about our capabilities. This is why a little more information is included on boundaries for the group to think about and discuss.

Sometimes establishing boundaries can feel selfish. This may be from a guilty conscience imparted by poor theology, or a "God complex" mentality where one thinks they are the saviour. A good servant is able to encourage and empower others to serve. If a church member has a God complex, they attempt to 'do it all' and are unwilling to share the load.

This is disempowering for others and also the individual; and can no doubt lead to burn out.

All the congregation are part of the body of Christ, they are to work in conjunction with one another to lessen each other's load, and support each other in the work of the church. When taking active roles, individuals need to set boundaries which will not only protect them from burnout, but will also protect the rest of the body from putting too much faith in their work. By setting boundaries and saying I can only do this much, the individual takes importance off himself, and helps others to take ownership within the church. When they take ownership, they will thrive spiritually and the church will be more alive for Christ.

Discussion questions:

- Have you been given the guilt trip for not taking on some sort of role?
- What can you do to keep yourself from being pressured into something you should not take on?
- If you take on a role that you realise is too hard for you, who can you call on for help?
- Have you thought that others may need you?
- What can you do to take the focus of how you can save others and refocus on how you can point them to Jesus?
- What role do you think you could offer to fill next time nominating committee is looking to fill positions?