
Servolution

Section 4: Serving in the workplace/school: May 25-31.

“I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one’s lifetime; moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God.”
(Ecclesiastes 3:12-13) NASB.

Thursday, May 25: Work is gift from God.

Genesis 1:26-31; 3:17-19,
Ecclesiastes 5:10-20, Psalm 127:1-5,
James 5:1-8, Luke 16:10-13

In Genesis 2:15 it says: Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it (NASB). God created us with the intention that we find enjoyment and fulfillment in our work, but after sin entered, work would not be so easy. We can still find enjoyment and fulfillment in our labour, because we are still designed with the purpose of using our bodies for good.

But just like anything, we can try to use it to satisfy our own selfish desires. Work can be used for one's selfish advantage. We can make others work hard to line our pockets, or become a workaholic because of the love of money among other things. But Solomon in Ecclesiastes gives counsel against this, as it is a waste of life. We are to be content with enough, and enjoy the fruits of our labour. Also, if we spend all our time at work, where will we find time to be a blessing to others.

- Are you currently serving work, instead of work serving you?
 - Do you need to find some service work to help you find meaning in life?
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Friday, May 26: Work to glorify God.

Colossians 3:22-25, Proverbs 6:6-11,
James 4:13-17, Ephesians 4:28

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:31: “*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (NASB). If we are working and glorifying God, then there is going to be some revelation of His love in our work. Paul in Colossians and Solomon in Proverbs encourage us to work heartily and intelligently. If we are lazy then we are a burden to others, but if we are diligent we gain the capacity to bless and serve others. But even in diligence, we need to keep a primary focus on God, and his will for our lives (James 4:15). Unless we are doing this, we are living our lives separate from the only one who can save us, and thus we are restricted from being blessed by God.

- We were designed to be active and to put to use our faculties. How can you use yours to find more fulfillment in your life?
- Following on from the group study on spiritual gifts, how could you put them to use in your work place?

Sabbath, May 27: Growing talents to serve.

Proverbs 3:1-35, Matthew 25:14-46,
Galatians 5:13-14

When working and studying we can gain a great deal knowledge and skill in a specific area. Proverbs 18:15 says “The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.” (NASB). When studying you may be tempted to think of it as a competition where you don’t want to get the lowest mark so you don’t fail the class. Or maybe you try to find shortcuts just so you can pass. But the whole idea of study is to learn. Sometimes the assessments themselves can even get in the way of learning. But the reason we should all learn, is to be more equipped to serve others in a greater capacity.

When serving in the workforce, many jobs have the benefit of giving the worker many skills and knowledge. This knowledge can be used to equip others with basic life skills that we often take for granted. Some of these basic life skills we can help others with are budgeting, literacy, health or technology. Each of us have unique talents we can use to serve others through practical and theoretical instruction.

- What is your unique skill set?
- Can you think of more areas than I have mentioned that you are well equipped in?
- Do you think you could help someone with your knowledge and skill?

Sunday, May 28: Serving demonstrates belief.

Matthew 5:14-16; 6:1-7,
Philippians 2:1-18

When interacting with work mates, you may find that the only understanding they have of Christianity, comes from what you do, or more like, what you don’t do. When you don’t swear or tell dirty jokes or go out and get drunk, all they see is that your life is guided by a heap of restrictions. Because of this, questions often come from the perspective of why don’t you, or why can’t you, rather than “oh wow you have freedom from what?” Matthew 5:16 Says to let your light shine before others so they may see your good works. But how do we understand this in light of the Pharisee praying in public to gain attention. The Pharisee did nothing to help others in person but tried to bring glory to himself. But Jesus is asking us to be humble so we can glorify God. God wants you to be public about the “works” and not hide the fact that you do serve. There is a time and place for revealing your beliefs about God, but the service and love that comes from true religion can be revealed without triggering hostility at almost any time. To turn the tables on your workmates negative understanding of Christianity, you could ask them to come and help out with one of the service projects the church is involved with. This gives you the opportunity to demonstrate what Christianity is all about.

- If you feel like you are under the microscope of others, what do you think they will think if you change for the better?
- What are some things you can do that others can’t because of your freedom in Christ?

Monday, May 29: Forgiveness removes barriers to serve.

Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-3,
Luke 6:37-38, Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60

Proverbs 17:9 “Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.” NASB.

When spending extended time with others there are good chances that tension has occurred because differences of opinion or because someone has done disrespectful things to work colleagues. Often these rifts remain unrepaired and avoidance occurs. But who should forgive and

who should make the first move to reconcile in these circumstances? It has nothing to do with who is in the right, it is up to you.

When I have been critical of someone about something, I have found God promptly reminding me that I had done the same thing, but in a different circumstance. It's easy to judge someone else for their faults, but we don't know what we would do if we had their upbringing and life circumstances. This does not make their sins any less bad, but brings an awareness that no one is any better than anyone else. Understanding that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) puts us all on a level playing field, we are all sinners in need of a saviour. Because of this if I don't forgive someone else, then how can I expect forgiveness. Forgiveness is not saying sin is ok, it is saying I release you and no longer hold a grudge against you; because I am no better than you, and have sinned like you. Once we have forgiven, the door of our heart is opened to serve the person we had contention with. Better than this is the example given by Jesus on the cross, as he asked the Father to forgive those who were crucifying him. But he was perfect, you might say, but Stephen wasn't, and he said the same thing while being killed. The same love that governs heaven is available to us today through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Don't you want God to give you the victory over self like that? Imagine the freedom to serve, that this love would bring.

- Are you being held captive to hurt that you need to give over to God?
- Will you ask God to place his love in your heart to override self? Be patient and don't give up, God isn't giving up on you.

Tuesday, May 30: Serving with the mouth.

James 3:1-18, Colossians 4:1-6,
Mark 7:20-23.

Mark 7:20-23 says what proceeds from a person is what defiles them. I have found that the more time I spend with someone the more they are able to see my true nature. And this nature is not necessarily shown through actions, but the words I say. We have the opportunity to serve others with what we say.

In a workplace was once at, the boss was very angry and clearly vocalised his frustration every time someone stuffed up. But he rarely gave anyone affirmation for the good work they did. This had the effect of disempowering the employees. Whatever we say, we have the ability to heal and empower, or destroy and bring another person down. Research says that the ratio of positive feedback or affirmation to negative feedback needs to be around 5:1 for the best relationships and productivity in workplaces and life. Those who divorce often have a ratio of one negative for every positive, or worse. If we struggle to control our tongue, it's probably a good indication that we need the helper Jesus promised us.

- If you grew up in a negative environment, how can you make the effort to be proactive in being positive and affirming?
- Can you think of at least one person to affirm each day for this week?
- Do you think you can make a habit of affirming someone every day?

Wednesday, May 31: Just have a Go

Rev 21:3-4; 22:1-21,
Luke 5:17, Psalm 138:1-18,
2 Corinthians 12:9

I have two green tree snakes living under my veranda. One a fair bit larger than the other. I don't know if one is female and one male, but what I have observed is that the larger one is more often out looking for food. Its bold and keeps looking for food almost as soon as I stop moving near it. But the small one just sits under there with its head sticking out, rarely moving out of its safety

zone in search of food. It's the same with us. If we are bold and remember the end goal, we will have the confidence that our efforts in serving are not in vain.

Luke 5:17 reveals that there are times when the Holy Spirit moves, and times when he doesn't. I remember watching a commentary on Russian politics, and a point that hit me was the idea that Russia does not try to force things, but the Russian way is to use the waves of opportunity to their advantage. It is the same with surfers, they don't try to make the wave, but at a moment's notice, they take advantage of it. So it should be with us. As God presents us with opportunity to serve and reach others, we need to get on board and go. Sometimes the wave might dump you or the church because it was too big or we had not learnt to ride it well enough. But God will always give another wave or opportunity to get up and try again on.

- What doubts and mountains are in the way of you being active in serving?
- If you have doubts and fears that are keeping you from serving, will you present them to God and ask for whatever he desires to give you so you can serve?

Week 4 Group study: Give a hand up or a hand out, or give a handout to give a hand up.

This week's group Bible study will discuss the balance between giving someone a hand out verses giving someone a hand up. Human nature tends to push us to extremes. When it comes to dealing with topics like Mercy and justice or grace and works, we often find people running in one direction or the other when in reality there is a middle road; or a balance between the two. When it comes to giving something to someone because they're in need (a hand out) verses empowering someone to get on top of things (a hand up), it can be easy to go one extreme or the other. You might find it's a lot easier to just give people food or money because it seems like a quick fix, but what is this doing for the situation? Is this perpetuating this situation? At what point do you tell the individual they need help to change? The problem with giving a hand up, is that it may seem to take more time and effort to help a person out of their situation and on their feet.

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:10-13 and Luke 6:20-38.

- Is there a contradiction between these verses? Paul in Thessalonians is writing about a believer, and it is quite possible Jesus is speaking of fellow Jews.
- Is Jesus saying in Luke 6:30 that we are to give until we are broke and on the street with our children? If not what is Jesus saying.
- Read Leviticus 19:9-10 Deuteronomy 24:17-22. Discuss if and how this is a hand out. Discuss if and how is this a hand up.

An example where a hand out leads to a hand up is with a certain food pantry. This pastor I know gives a hand out with no strings attached, but he invites the regulars who get the food, to come and help out with the food parcels. By doing this, those who were getting a hand out start to learn and gain fulfillment in their work. This has led to some of them asking the pastor for work references, because they decided they now want to work and earn a living.

- Find five ministries the church and individuals do or have done to give people a hand out?
- Find five ministries the church and individuals do or have done to give people a hand up?
- How can these ministries work together to better or more effectively serve others?
- Can you think of an instance when a handout has worked to become a hand up?

- What situations can you think of when a handout becomes a detriment to someone's situation?

Sometimes people need to hit rock bottom before they will look up and accept they need to change.

- In these circumstances, how can you show them love and mercy without causing harm?
- What role does prayer play in these situations?

Read Ephesians 4:28. If the prison system does not educate and empower, what chance do you think ex inmates have of succeeding at life?

- I mentioned in the reading for Sabbath the 27th, some of the basic life skills we can help others with (budgeting, literacy, health or technology). What are some of the skills you have, that you can use to teach someone in order to give them a hand up?
- Discuss what talents each other has in the group and discuss situations you may be able to use them to Serve?

Finish by reading Psalm 25:12 and Isaiah 58:10,11.
