

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

WEEK 7: THE DISCIPLINE OF SERVICE

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- Have you ever wondered how to grow in Christ? What is the believer's role in his or her own sanctification? How can we move from simply wanting to grow to actually seeing real spiritual growth in a way that honors God and avoids self-reliance? What examples can we follow in growing in godliness?
- This multi-week course will look at the biblical call for believers to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, while wholly leaning on God's strength as he powerfully works within us!
- God calls us to pursue holiness, train up our children, grow in spiritual wisdom, knowledge and understanding, and be transformed by the renewing of our minds. So, this course will look practically at the training we do as we trust in the Lord with all of our heart!
- We will discover through personal testimony, biblical foundations, and historical accounts how to get the spiritual workout we need to walk worthy. No discipline is easy, so we will also talk about where the pitfalls and hurdles are that keep us from running the race well.
- **Class Schedule:**
 - April 26: Introduction and Maturity in Godliness
 - May 3: Discipline of Bible Intake
 - May 10: Discipline of the Mind
 - May 17: Discipline of Time and Money
 - May 24: No Class, Memorial Day Weekend
 - May 31: Discipline of Prayer
 - **June 7: Discipline of Service**
 - June 14: Discipline of Perseverance
 - June 21: Discipline of Worship
 - June 28: Discipline of Evangelism

INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE

- What comes to mind when you think of service?
- What makes your acts of service unique from that of the worlds? Have you ever thought about that? As a follower of Christ, what makes your acts of service different from anyone else's?

- Remember our purpose in discipline.
 - 1 Timothy 4:7discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness
 - “...Christlikeness is the goal, the reason we should practice the Disciplines. Without this purpose in our practice, the performance of Spiritual Disciplines—no matter how consistent or vigorous—is vain and nothing more than an empty husk of godliness. So while we cannot be godly without the practice of the Disciplines, we can practice the Disciplines without being godly if we see them as ends and not means.”¹

- The goal of our class today will be to understand what Christian service is and how we can discipline ourselves toward greater Christlikeness in this area.
- Anyone can serve, believers and unbelievers alike. The difference is our motivation and our model. Or to put it another way, why are you serving and how are you serving? This is where we must discipline ourselves.
- As Christians, our service must be motivated by the gospel. When we contemplate the great sacrificial love that God has shown us, our hearts are motivated to serve Him and others out of love and obedience. This gospel motivation also points us to our model for service, Christ. He humbled Himself and sacrificially came, not to be served as the great King He is, but to serve. When we think through these things, it helps us to understand the ways in which we can discipline our thinking and our acts of service for the glory of God and for the good of others.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN SERVICE?

What it isn't:

- Not a means to gain salvation
- Not a means to gain recognition
- Not to meet God's needs
- Not self-serving
- Not a steppingstone to something “more important”
- Not limited to manual labor
- Not natural
 - Before Christ, our selfish desire was to be served rather than to serve.

¹ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 9
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What it is:

- Service is obedience to God
 - **Psalm 100:2 (NASB95)** — 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing.
 - **Matthew 4:10 (NASB95)** — 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’ ”
 - All believers are commanded to serve.
- Service is exercising your gifts for the building up of Christ’s church
 - **1 Peter 4:10 (NASB95)** — 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
 - **Ephesians 4:11–12 (NASB95)** — 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ
 - All believers are gifted to serve.
- Service is God supplied
 - **1 Peter 4:11 (NASB95)** — 11whoever 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.
- You are commanded to serve and you are gifted to serve, but are you willing to serve?

THE DISCIPLINE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

- How do we discipline ourselves for Christian service?
- Sometimes we must discipline ourselves to be obedient to a life of serving.
 - At times, serving can seem monotonous and unspectacular
 - “Two of the deadliest of our sins—sloth and pride—loathe serving. They paint glazes on our eyes and put chains on our hands and feet so that we don’t serve as we know we should or even as we want. If we don’t discipline ourselves to serve for the sake of Christ and His kingdom and for the purpose of godliness, we’ll “serve” only occasionally or when it’s convenient or self-serving. The result will be a quantity and quality of service we’ll regret when the Day of Accountability for our service comes.”²
 - Do I only serve when opportunity falls in my lap, or do I seek opportunity to serve?
- Once we discipline ourselves to serve, we must consider if we are serving for the right reasons or in the right way? We must also discipline ourselves to have proper motivations and follow the proper model.

² Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 143-144
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Remember our motivation for serving: the Gospel

Reflecting on the precious truths of the gospel provides the right motivations for serving.

The gospel reminds us to serve.....

- Because of God's great love for us
 - **Galatians 2:20 (NASB95)** — 20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
 - **1 John 4:19–20 (NASB95)** — 19 We love, because He first loved us. 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.
 - Is my service motivated by love for God?
 - Do I have other motives in my heart?
- Because we are not our own and have been bought with a price
 - **1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (NASB95)** — 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.
 - Whose purposes am I trying to accomplish?
- Because it is Christ whom we serve
 - **Colossians 3:23–24 (NASB95)** — 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.
 - Do I serve for earthly rewards or recognition?
 - Do I limit my serving to particular people or groups?
 - Do I focus more on serving myself rather than Christ?
- Because it glorifies Christ
 - **1 Peter 4:11 (NASB95)** — 11 ...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.
 - Do I serve only when someone is watching?
 - Do I serve if nobody else knows?
 - Do I always need to tell someone how I served?
- Because we were saved for good works
 - **Ephesians 2:10 (NASB95)** — 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
 - Do I consider my purpose when managing my time?

Remember our model for serving: Jesus Christ

Reflecting on the life and ministry of our Lord provides a perfect model of service for us to follow.

- Humility
 - **John 13:13–16 (NASB95)** — 13 “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 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.

- Am I greater than my master? Do I consider myself above certain tasks?
 - Consider the difference between understanding your gifts and pride.
- Selflessness
 - **Matthew 20:28 (NASB95)** — 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”
 - **Philippians 2:3–5 (NASB95)** — 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus
 - Do I expect others to serve me or am I seeking ways to serve others?
 - Do I truly regard others as more important than myself?
- Willingness
 - **Matthew 26:53 (NASB95)** — 53 “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?
 - Do I look for ways to escape serving?
- Aligned with God’s purposes
 - **Matthew 26:39 (NASB95)** — 39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”
 - Do I pray about and consider God’s will when making decisions about serving?
- Sacrificial
 - **Matthew 20:28 (NASB95)** — 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”
 - **Mark 6:30–34 (NASB95)** — 30 The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. 31 And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) 32 They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. 33 The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. 34 When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.
 - Do I serve sacrificially? Am I willing to sacrifice even my down time for the good of others?
- Love
 - **Galatians 2:20 (NASB95)** — 20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
 - Do I have this same kind of love for others?
 - When I think of serving someone, do I think, “I love them, and I will give my time and resources to them”?
- Unmerited
 - **Romans 5:7–8 (NASB95)** — 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
 - **Matthew 5:44–47 (NASB95)** — 44 “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..... 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 “If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
 - Am I willing to serve those who wouldn’t think of serving me? My enemies?

FRUITS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

- Christlikeness
 - If we model our service after Christ, then our serving makes us more like Christ.
 - We grow in humility, selflessness, love, etc.
- Health of the body
 - **Ephesians 4:11–13 (NASB95)** — 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NASB95) — 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

Hebrews 6:10 (NASB95) — 10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO SERVE

Serve God

- By practicing the other disciplines
- Growing in Christlikeness
- If we are not serving God, we cannot serve others with the proper motive or model.
- If we are serving God, our hearts will overflow with service to others.

Serve Others

- Outside the church
 - Caring for a sick neighbor
 - Evangelizing the lost
 - Servant's heart at home
- Inside the church
 - From pulpit to prayer to pond maintenance.
- How do I start serving others at MBC?
 - See list
 - Talk to a deacon or elder
 - Have something else in your mind and on your heart?
 - Any known needs?