



Lesson Title: When Should We Serve?



Key Concept: Service is key to our identity as disciples of Jesus and to living out the greatest commandment. But when should we serve? We are called to serve God always, which means serving him even when it doesn't feel like service.



Scriptures:

“When you bring the people out of Egypt, you and they will serve God at this mountain.”

(Exodus 3:12 *New English Translation*)

No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other.

(Matthew 6:24 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1; Jonah, Exodus 7–10; Joshua 22:5; 1 Kings 9:9; Luke 4:8; John 12:26; Acts 26:7; Romans 12:11



Lesson Thoughts:

When we search the Bible, it never tells us when to serve. We see service in all times and circumstances, so service is for any situation, but what does it mean to always serve? In order to answer this, we must consider who we are serving, and when to serve them. The Bible describes serving God and our neighbor.

Let us first look at God. Jesus instructed his followers, “You must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). This sounds like always. Always serving God is also shown by biblical prophets and leaders. They went when God said go, spoke when God said speak, and acted when God said act. We serve always because service is worship in motion. In Exodus 3:12, the word “serve” could also be translated “worship.” Just as we always worship God, so we should always serve him. This is shown in Romans 12:1, when Paul instructed his readers to give God their bodies, saying this is the way to worship.

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What about our neighbor? We see prophets and ministers serving in the night and in the day, when at home and when in foreign cities: all sorts of times. So, should we always be serving our neighbor as well? Here we run into a problem. While he was originally talking about money, Jesus' words in Matthew apply here. If we are always serving God, and also always serving our neighbor, what happens when it seems our neighbor needs us, but God wants us somewhere else? We are forced to betray at least one perceived commitment.

The key to balance is to recognize that even when we serve our neighbor, we are still serving our master. And he demands singular focus. Jesus is the center of our lives. That means when he says to serve, we serve without hesitation. But it also means when he wants us elsewhere, or says to pause, we don't get to keep serving as we have. Moses and Jesus both took breaks from serving people in order to spend time with God. Moses spent weeks away from his people, talking with the God he was really serving. And Jesus commonly left the crowds to go pray. In the same way, when God calls us to shift our serving, we must change.

When should we serve? Always. For to truly worship is to serve. But who should we always serve? God. We do what he says, with whom he says, how he says, where he says, when he says. We even stop when he tells us. We don't just serve God when we understand. We serve God always.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) When can it be hard to truly serve God?
- 2) When can it be hard to serve the people God calls you to?
- 3) When can it be hard to obey God and stop serving?
- 4) Has there ever been a difficult time God called you to serve? Share the story.
- 5) Has there ever been a time God called you to stop serving in some way? Share the story.

Notes and Reflections

- 1) When does serving specific people come into conflict with serving God? How can you prevent these conflicts? How can you deal with them if they happen anyway?
- 2) Find stories in the Bible about leaders who stopped serving in one area to go and serve where God called them. How did those leaders handle the change?
- 3) Find stories in the Bible where leaders rested from serving. When did they rest, and what did they do?
- 4) In the book of Jonah, God changed his instructions on how Jonah should serve. How did Jonah handle it? How would you handle it?
- 5) What was the result of Jonah's obedience to his change in service? What have been the results of changes in your service?

Notes and Reflections, cont.