



Lesson Title: What Is Service?



Key Concept: Service is key to our identity as disciples of Jesus and to living out the greatest commandment. But what is service? A biblical understanding of service places us in submission to God and others.



Scriptures:

⁵You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁶Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. (Philippians 2:5–6 *New Living Translation*)

¹⁰God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. ¹¹Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 4:10–11 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Matthew 23:11; Mark 10:42–45; Matthew 20:16; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Matthew 22:37–39



Lesson Thoughts:

Serving is an attitude. Philippians 2:5–8 describes that Jesus took the position of a slave. He humbled himself in obedience to God to fulfill the plan of salvation. As Christians, we are to have the same attitude. Serving is humility and obedience. To be servants in the kingdom, we must willingly devote ourselves to God's will.

Serving is the result of a radical value shift. Jesus told the disciples, "The greatest among you must be a servant" (Matthew 23:11). This kingdom concept of greatness through servanthood was a prevalent theme that Jesus taught to direct his disciples away from the behavior of hypocritical leaders. "The rulers in this

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world lord it over the people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different” (Mark 10:42–43). Do you want to be great? Be a servant. Do you want to be first? Be a slave to all. Jesus lived radically as a servant who gave “his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:44–45).

Although the Greek words for servant and slave are different, both are used in the Bible to express the relationship of a believer to the Master and to others. Paul, James, and Peter all referred to themselves as slaves to God. (See Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1.) This is how the New Testament authors thought of themselves in fulfilling the Master’s commands. They identified themselves as slaves, the lowest segment in society, devoting themselves to Christ and living as debtors to him.¹ Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, “You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price.” As Christians, we live not to do what we want but what our Master calls us to do.² This is how we identify as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Serving is love in action. Peter instructs us to use the spiritual gifts to serve one another. Living out the greatest commandment—to love God and our neighbor as ourselves—is done through serving. With a humble and obedient attitude as servants in the kingdom, we live out loving God and others through our service.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) How does our attitude affect the way we serve?
- 2) How do we show love to our neighbor through serving?
- 3) Is there a Bible verse that helps you better understand what it means to serve?
- 4) What societal values clash with Matthew 23:11, “The greatest among you must be a servant”?
- 5) When is serving easy? When is serving hard?

Next Lesson: Who Should Serve?

¹“Slave or Servant? What does the Greek word δοῦλος mean and how should we translate it?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3vQeD99lqI>, streamed live on May 26, 2021.

² “Slave or Servant?”

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) How do you use your spiritual gifts to serve others? How have you seen others using spiritual gifts to serve?
- 2) How have others used spiritual gifts to minister to you?
- 3) Think of a new way to use your gifts to serve.
- 4) As you reflect on these three questions, take some time to meditate on this aspect of 1 Peter 4:10-11, "Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ."

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Notes and Reflections, cont.