

What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?

A Christian Is A Servant



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

A Christian Is A Servant

Learn that every Christian must be a servant and who the Christian must and must not serve

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?

A Christian Is A Servant

What does it mean to be a Christian? Being a Christian means a great deal. Fortunately, God has given us all the information we need to know about what being a Christian really means. As we study His saving message, we discover that a Christian is a servant.

You Are Called A “Servant”

The typical person does not like to be called a “servant.” This implies that you are below another person in some way. Instead, most people think of themselves as being “above” the lowly place of a servant, thinking that someone else should actually be serving them. In fact, the “me first” mentality (“What’s in it for me?”) is prevalent today. However, as a Christian, the Bible *does* call you a servant. It does so by using two Greek words. Consider both of them now: The words *doulos* and *diakonos*.

Doulos

This Greek word actually implies something a bit stronger than a servant. In the *New King James Version* of the Bible, this is commonly translated “bondservant.” The word is, perhaps, more appropriately translated as “slave.” This is someone who is devoted to another and gives up his own interests in order to fulfill the desires of another.

Consider some examples of this word being used in the pages of the Scriptures. First, this word could be used regarding those who were literally slaves of earthly masters (see Ephesians 6:5-6; Colossians 3:22; Titus 2:9). Second, this word could be used to describe everyone who is a Christian. For instance, in Romans 1:1, Paul identifies himself as “a bondservant of Jesus Christ.” In Romans 6:17-20, Paul writes that Christians were once “slaves of sin,” but have now been set free from sin in order that they would be “slaves of righteousness for holiness.” And, 1 Peter 2:16 also identifies Christians as “bondservants of God” – even though they were free from being slaves to an earthly master.

Diakonos

This Greek word is more in line with what we typically picture whenever we think of someone who is a “servant.” This word can refer to someone who is the servant or attendant to another in a high position (i.e. a king). But, it is also used of the responsibility every Christian has to be attending to the needs of others – regardless of their position in a society. Then, it is used very specifically to identify the work of a “deacon” in a local church (who is a special servant of the church).

Consider some examples of this word being used in the pages of the Scriptures (with reference to Christians serving others). First, it is used generally and is applicable to all Christians (sometimes translated as “minister”/“ministers”). Paul spoke about he and his companions being “ministers of God” (2 Corinthians 6:4). In 1 Timothy 4:6, Paul encouraged Timothy to be a “good minister of Jesus Christ.” And, Paul speaks of a woman, in Romans 16:1, who was “a servant of the church in Cenchrea.”

Second, this word can be used specifically with regard to those who fill one of the offices in a local church. For instance, Philippians 1:1 identifies a group of “deacons” in the Philippian congregation. And, 1 Timothy 3:8-13 provides specific qualifications for those who would serve as “deacons.” These are special servants of the local church who must meet these God-given qualifications.

A servant of one master

As you can see, Christians are referred to as servants and slaves. Both words contain the same ideas of giving oneself over to accomplish the desires of another. However, as you now begin to consider yourself as a servant, you must come to view yourself as a servant of only one master. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

This word “serve” is a form of the word *doulos*. Obviously, an individual could not be the slave of two masters – and be totally devoted to both. That individual would have to split up his time and divide his focus in order to serve both of them. And, whenever one master would request something that the other master would not approve of, how would the slave please both of his masters? He simply could not. Therefore, that individual would have to choose which master he desired to serve.

In the same way, the Christian cannot serve two masters. As a Christian, you must consider yourself as a servant/slave of God (i.e. Romans 1:1). You must be fully committed to serving God’s ways of righteousness rather than your own selfish and sinful desires (i.e. Romans 6:17-20). You simply cannot please God while you are only partially devoted to accomplishing His will. He will not find your service acceptable if you are living to please Him *some* of the time and living for another master the rest of the time. In another place, Jesus simply said, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad” (Matthew 12:30).

Now, through this lesson, we will be observing that the Christian *does* have the responsibility to serve others (i.e. God’s family, his own family, and all mankind). However, this is done in service to God – not opposed to His service. The Christian serves all of those people because that is exactly what God wants him to be doing. Yet, the Christian must *never* place his service to those people above his service to God. Instead, it is always done in harmony with the will of the Almighty God. As a Christian, you are a servant of God first and

foremost. Then, as a servant of God, you will also be a servant of others.

Whose servant are you?

I want you to go back to Romans 6. Let’s read all of verses 16-23. “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Please notice that you are a servant/slave of another. Everyone is. It is just a question of who or what. The principle is clearly stated in verse 16: You are the slave of the one you give yourself to obey. Either you are the slave of sin (which results in spiritual death) or you are the slave of righteousness (which results in everlasting life in Heaven). So, this entire issue is boiled down to two very simple points. If you are a slave of sin, you are living to serve the desires of Satan – who wants you to live in the ways that are contrary to the will of God that will result in your eternal condemnation. However, if you are a slave of righteousness, you are living to serve the desires of God – who wants you to live in holy ways that will result in your eternal salvation.

So, once again, the question is not *if* you are a servant. The question is: Whose servant are you? Are you serving the master of sin? This is a master that allows you to live according to your own fleshly

desires. However, sin is a hard master in that you will likely experience some consequences of your sin while you live on this earth, you will never experience true and lasting happiness, and you will suffer throughout all eternity. Or, are you serving the master of righteousness? This master requires great self-denial and sacrifice temporarily; but it is the only master that will result in avoiding physical consequences due to your own sin, experiencing true happiness, and living eternally in Heaven when life on this earth is over.

Why You Are A Servant Of God

As I mentioned in the beginning of this lesson, people do not typically like to view themselves as servants of others. A servant must put someone else's interests above his own and consider someone else to be more significant than himself. So, why should you consider yourself as a servant of God and serve those God instructs you to serve?

Because you chose to serve God

God did not force you to serve Him. Instead, as a Christian, you were the one who made the willful decision to serve God. You were the one who chose to be obedient to the commandments of God so that you could be saved from the consequences of your sin. Look at Romans 6:17-18 again. "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

What was that "form of doctrine" you obeyed in order to be set free from sin and become the servant/slave of God? It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. After all, it is the gospel of Jesus Christ that is God's power for salvation (Romans 1:16). In order to become a Christian and be forgiven of your sins, the gospel required that you: (1) Hear the word of God (Romans 10:17), (2) believe (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6), (3) repent of your sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30), (4) confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:38-

39), and (5) be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). Upon obeying these instructions from God, you were forgiven of your sins and added to Christ's church (His body of the saved).

Because you were bought at a price

What made that great transformation and change in masters even possible is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When you were serving the master of sin, you were "dead in trespasses and sins" and were subject to the wrath of the Almighty God (Ephesians 2:1-3). You could not do anything to merit your own release from being enslaved to sin.

There was only one who could provide what was necessary in order for you to be released from sin. That one was Jesus Christ. Listen to John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Romans 6:23 also makes it clear that what you deserved to experience was the "wages of sin" – which is spiritual "death." However, "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now, you can "not perish" by spending eternity in Hell fire and you can "have everlasting life." Still, this great opportunity is the gift of God. You could never bring this result about through your own conduct.

The only price that was sufficient to ransom you from the consequences of your sins was the precious blood of Jesus Christ. It was Jesus Christ who willingly left Heaven to come to this earth and give Himself as the sacrifice for your sins. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, "knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." You could not be ransomed by any amount of physical treasures (like gold or silver). Only the precious blood of Jesus could effect your release from the consequences of sin.

Now, since Jesus Christ has shed His blood for you on the cross (dying for the sins that you had committed), you must not consider your life as your own. You are not free to live in just any way you

desire now that Jesus Christ has ransomed you with His blood. Instead, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says that you are not your own. You “were bought at a price.” Therefore, you must “glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” If you truly recognize the price God has paid to save you from the consequences of your sins, shouldn’t you desire to devote yourself entirely to God’s service (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Galatians 2:20; Romans 12:1-2)?

Because Christ was a servant

Thanks be to God that Jesus Christ considered Himself a servant! In Matthew 20:27-28, Jesus taught a lesson about considering yourself as a servant/slave. He said, “And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Just think of what would have happened to you if Jesus Christ would have been unwilling to serve! What if He (as the Son of God and the Creator of this world) came to earth and demanded that everyone serve Him while He was here? While He would be fully deserving of that service, mankind would have been hopelessly lost in his sins!

Instead, Jesus Christ came to serve and to provide the ransom sacrifice so that mankind could be saved from the consequences of his sin. Consider Philippians 2:5-11. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Although Jesus Christ possessed the very nature of being God, He did not consider that something to prevent Him from coming to this earth and giving His life as a sacrifice for sins. Certainly,

no one could force Jesus to leave Heaven and present Himself as the sacrifice for sin. He would only do so if He made the willful choice. And, that is exactly what He did. He willfully left Heaven to come to this earth. He chose to take on human form, considering himself as a “bondservant” (slave). He humbled Himself (even though He was God) and obeyed the will of the Father – even to the point of being put to death on the cross! Now, because Jesus Christ has served in this way, He has been exalted by the Father above every name in heaven and on earth! Then, as you consider Christ’s attitude of a servant (even though He was God), you must evaluate why God would expect anything less from you than serving Him? Remember, verse 5 commanded: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Because Christ taught the importance of serving

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is the ultimate demonstration of service. In it, God died for the ungodly (see Romans 5:6-11). But, this is not the only example of Christ’s service or the only time Christ teaches about serving. Also consider the events that transpired in John 13:1-17.

At this time when Jesus was with His disciples and were eating together, Jesus “rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded” (John 13:4-5). Now, please appreciate the fact that during this time, it would have been likely that those who were eating were reclined on the floor, propped up on their left arms with their legs extended outward. Also, understand that those who were traveling to supper would not have had modern shoes and socks or an air-conditioned vehicle to ride in. Instead, they typically wore sandals and walked on very dusty roads to get wherever they needed to go.

Therefore, whenever someone would be invited to dinner, the host would need to show hospitality and wash the feet of those who entered the house. This, as you can imagine, was a very lowly job. Yet, here is the picture of God in the flesh (Jesus Christ) doing the work of a servant. And, please consider that Jesus did not just wash the feet of those

who loved Him (i.e. Simon Peter, John, etc.). John 13 also says that Judas Iscariot was there – and that the devil had already put it into Judas’ heart to betray Jesus Christ (see verse 2). And, even though Jesus “knew who would betray Him” (verse 11), Jesus washed Judas’ feet.

Then, consider what Jesus concluded about His act of service. “So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them’” (John 13:12-17).

Therefore, not only did Jesus provide a great lesson in service through His sacrifice in coming to this earth and dying on the cross, but He also provides a great lesson He wants you to apply about serving others in this example found in John 13. The instruction, “you also ought to wash one another’s feet” is not to be interpreted as some meaningless religious ritual. Instead, it is the instruction to imitate Christ’s sacrificial attitude that He demonstrated as a servant – and look for opportunities to serve other people (even when it is a job that nobody else wants to do)!

Some You Must Not Serve

Now, as you build upon the previously established principles from the Scriptures, you need to begin making practical applications. And, as you attempt to learn about what your service ought to look like, you should also spend some time considering what your service should *not* look like. Remember the important principle that was established earlier in this study: You cannot serve two masters. So, if you truly desire to serve God, you must determine *not* to serve anything/anyone

contrary to Him. Therefore, consider some you must *not* serve.

Sin

Sin is anything that is contrary to the instructions of God. 1 John 3:4, for instance, identifies sin as being “lawlessness.” 1 John 5:17 says that, “All unrighteousness is sin.” So, sin is acting without or contrary to the law of God.

Let’s go back to Romans 6. Now, in chapter 5, Paul has identified spiritual blessings that you have through Jesus Christ (who gave His life for you so that you could be saved eternally). Now, in chapter 6, Paul anticipates some questions about the connection between this grace of God and sin.

First, he asks and answers the question, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (verse 1). That is, can’t you keep on sinning so that the grace of God can just keep abounding and covering your sin? His response (verse 2): “Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” He continues (in verses 3-14), then, to demonstrate that you (as a Christian) have died to sin, been buried with Christ in baptism, and been raised to walk in newness of life. He says that you should know that your old man of sin was crucified and done away with so that you should no longer be the slave of sin. Instead, you have been freed from sin and must not allow sin to have any dominion (rule) over your earthly life. You must not consider the members of your physical body as an instrument to accomplish the unrighteousness of sin. Instead, you must consider your body as an instrument to accomplish the righteousness of God!

Second, he asks and answers the question, “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” (verse 15). Once again, the answer is, “Certainly not!” (verse 15). He reasons (in verses 16-23, as read earlier) that you are the slave of the one you obey and that you have been set free from your slavery to sin (which was leading you to death) and have been enslaved to righteousness (which leads you to eternal life).

Therefore, as a Christian, you must not be devoting yourself to the service of any kind of sin. All sin is contrary to the will of God. And, all sin

enslaves you to the devil and leads you to spiritual death. 1 John 3:8-9 says that this is how you can know whether you are truly a child of God or if you are a child of the devil. “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.” Now, this does *not* mean that you cannot sin as a Christian. Instead, it teaches that you will not sin as long as you are following the ways of your Heavenly Father! And, as a child of God, you must choose to serve your Heavenly Father rather than the devil.

Mammon

Let’s look at Matthew 6:24 again. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” We have already considered the truth that no person can effectively serve two masters at the same time. There must be a choice. Ultimately, this choice is between serving God and serving the ways of sin.

But, specifically, Jesus says that it is impossible to serve God and “mammon.” Mammon simply refers to wealth/riches. Earlier in the chapter, Jesus warned about putting your focus on accumulating earthly treasures (see Matthew 6:19-21). He said that earthly treasures will be stolen, rust, and decay. Ultimately, in other passages (i.e. Luke 12:13-21), Jesus identifies the truth that your earthly treasures will be taken away from you at the time of your death. However, heavenly treasures will never be taken away from you.

Yet, there are many people who focus on accumulating earthly treasures during the course of their lifetimes. Still, as a Christian, you must not put your focus on accumulating worldly things (i.e. money, worldly possessions). Putting your focus on such things will cause you to waste your life by chasing after something that will not be of any real benefit to you! While you will likely gain some temporary enjoyment from wealth, listen to 1 John 2:15-17. “Do not love the world or the things in the

world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

An idol

Throughout the pages of the Bible (in both the Old and New Testaments), God has warned His people about the foolishness of serving idols. Yet, throughout the Bible (in both the Old and New Testaments), you can read about people who decided to pursue idolatry. Consider Romans 1:24-25 as an example. “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

Earlier in the chapter (verses 18-23), the apostle Paul wrote concerning the clear evidence they should have accepted about the existence of God and His complete power. Yet, these individuals decided to reject that knowledge of God in order to worship and serve that which God has created. Unfortunately, idolatry did not stop with the people of Romans 1.

Today, idols exist in all different shapes and sizes, and are made out of many different materials. You see, an idol is anything created that you worship and serve. Therefore, anything that takes away from the worship and service you should be giving to God is an idol in your life! It could be a statue. It could be money. It could be a family member or friend. It could be an earthly possession. It could be a job. It could be worldly success. It could be false religion. It could be some earthly pleasure. It could be a hobby or interest. Still, whatever it is, you must recognize that serving and worshiping anything that is created is foolish and will not result in pleasing God!

Self

Ultimately, the choice to serve anything or anyone besides God (the Creator) comes down to the decision to serve yourself. After all, this is how Satan

Some You Must Serve

tries to lure you away from serving God. He appeals to your earthly desires and tries to convince you to fulfill those earthly desires in ways that do not please God. Then, whenever you act in the way that violates the law of God, you are enslaved to sin. This is what James wrote in James 1:14-15. “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

Paul speaks of some who were only interested in serving themselves in Romans 16:17-18. “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.” Interestingly, they were *not* serving God and were serving their own selfish desires (their own bellies/appetites) - even though they were professing to be religious. They were, apparently, claiming to be Christians and would be among the Christian churches in Rome. Yet, their true interest was only in serving themselves.

As a Christian, you are called to deny your own earthly desires in order to serve Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). Similarly, the apostle Paul wrote that if you truly desire to be victorious and win the prize of eternal life that God offers to you, you must be willing to deny yourself of the temporary pleasures. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, he says that this is like those who compete in an athletic event. He says that they deny themselves of temporary pleasures in order that they might receive the reward for winning the race. Even more, he says that those who are striving to win an eternal prize (in Heaven) ought to be willing to deny themselves of the temporary pleasures of this life! So, if you want to please God and win the eternal crown of life in Heaven, you must not serve your own earthly pleasures!

Next, not only must you keep yourself from serving all of these, but you must also dedicate yourself to serving some. Therefore, let’s investigate the Scriptures to see what you are taught concerning who you must serve.

God

First and foremost, you must serve God. As we considered earlier in this study, He is actually the only one you are serving (since you cannot serve two masters). However, as we will see, serving God also involves serving others – because He has commanded that you serve them. But, let’s first establish the fact that you must serve God and understand what is involved in this.

We have actually been observing this periodically throughout the course of this lesson. So, at this point, let’s just look at one additional passage. It comes from Matthew 4 – in the context of Jesus being tempted by Satan. The temptation Jesus will respond to in verse 10 is recorded in verses 8-9. This is the temptation of Satan showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. Then, Satan said, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” However, Jesus responded, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”

Jesus recognized what you also must recognize: God simply does not approve of you worshiping or serving anything or anyone besides Him! So, if you will determine to serve God completely in your life, you will only be doing the things God wants you to do and you will not serve anything or anyone God does not approve. Will you commit yourself to that work today? Will you only serve and worship God? Will you do everything He instructs you to do – even when it means that you must deny yourself of your own physical desires?

God’s family

If you are dedicated to serving God, you will be serving those who are members of God’s family

(your Christian brothers and sisters). Consider some of God's teachings about your responsibility to serve His family. First, recall that Jesus commanded His disciples to serve one another (see John 13:12-17). Second, Romans 16:1-2 records the approved example of one woman who devoted her life to God and was a "servant of the church in Cenchrea." Third, Galatians 5:13 commands, "through love serve one another." Fourth, Ephesians 5:21 instructs that you submit yourself to your Christian brethren. And, 1 Corinthians 13:5 says that one of the qualities of love God approves is that it does not seek its own.

This all should point you to serving the members of God's family. Then, I want you to consider the teaching of Philippians 2:3-4. And, as you consider this passage, recall that verses 5-11 taught you about the service and humility of Jesus Christ, telling you that you should have the same mind of Christ. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

But, how can you actually serve the interests of your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ? There are many ways to accomplish it – both physically and spiritually. Galatians 6:10 gives the principle that should guide you in this work. "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Physically, you look for every opportunity to do something for them. You can look for opportunities to help them do things they are incapable of doing (mowing their grass, cleaning their houses, driving them to appointments, etc.). And, you can do things just to demonstrate your true love for them (i.e. take a meal to them, help them complete a project, etc.). Spiritually, you can offer them spiritual encouragement to overcome temptations (Hebrews 3:12-13), you can help bear their burdens (Galatians 6:2), you can warn them about sin in their lives (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20), etc.

Your family

Next, if you are dedicated to serving God, you will be serving those who are in your own family. After all, the instruction of Galatians 6:10

applies to your own family just as much as it does in your service to anyone else. In fact, not only does it give the responsibility to serve those who are your Christian brothers and sisters (which some of your family members may be), but it also gives you the responsibility to serve all men as you have opportunity.

Specifically, God has given you some responsibilities toward those who are in your family. For instance, read Ephesians 5:22-6:4, Colossians 3:18-21, and 1 Peter 3:1-7 to see some responsibilities involved in your role as husband, wife, father, mother, and/or child. Each one of these instructions involves various ways you should serve these family members. Spouses serve one another to help each other live for the Lord. Children serve their parents by being obedient to their instructions and learning from their training. And, parents serve their children by providing the training in the ways of God. You see, the best functioning family will not be the one in which each member of the family is seeking selfish pursuits, but the one in which all the members of the family are trying to glorify God by serving one another.

But, how can you actually serve the members of your family? Again, I would suggest that you can serve them physically and spiritually. Physically, spouses can help one another accomplish their work. Children can give back to their parents and grandparents when they are older (1 Timothy 5:4). Generally, any family member who needs help should receive help from his/her family members. Spiritually, you can serve your family members by teaching them the gospel of Jesus Christ (John 1:41-42), bearing their burdens (Galatians 6:2), encouraging them to do the right things (Hebrews 3:12-13), warning them for their sins (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20), etc.

All people

Finally, if you desire to serve God, you will be serving all mankind, as you have opportunity to do so. Again, Galatians 6:10 gives you this responsibility. Certainly, you come into contact with many different people during your lifetime who could be served in many different ways. The

Scriptures teach that you are to serve them according to your ability and opportunity.

Just consider Jesus' teaching about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). First, understand that Jesus taught this parable in response to someone asking about who his neighbor is (verse 29). Then, as this Samaritan came across a wounded man, recognize that these men were complete strangers. Yet, Jesus says that the Samaritan treated the wounded stranger with great love (even though it was a sacrifice for himself). He tended immediately to the man's wounds, gave the man his animal to ride on, and paid for his expenses to bring him back to health. And, just as important as recognizing what this Samaritan did is to also recognizing that there were individuals who were unwilling to serve the wounded man in this way (whose actions are condemned by the parable).

But, what does it mean to serve all men? Again, the instruction of Galatians 6:10 is to do good to everyone as you have opportunity to do good to them. Once more, this could be physical or spiritual. Physically, perhaps you have opportunity to feed someone who is hungry, help someone pay a bill that he/she cannot pay, etc. Spiritually, since these are not Christians, you should be willing to serve them by taking advantage of every opportunity to teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ, recognizing the serious danger their souls are in (see 2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Characteristics Needed In A Servant

We have been focused on learning about being a servant so that you can please God. As a servant, you must put the needs and interests of others ahead of your own desires and interests. So, if you are going to fulfill your responsibility to be a servant, you must develop some characteristics. Let's briefly consider a few necessary characteristics.

The heart of a servant

You must live your life viewing yourself as a servant to those we have discussed, as you serve God in your life. You must be viewing every situation you are in from the standpoint of how God wants you to serve Him and how you might be able to serve other people. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

Love for God

If you are going to dedicate your life to serving God and fulfilling His instructions in your life, you must love Him with every fiber of your being. In Matthew 22:37, Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:36). And, if you love God, it means that you must keep His commandments – and His commandments must not be burdensome to you (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3).

Love for mankind

If you are going to serve mankind in the way God desires, you must also love all mankind as much as you love yourself. Jesus said that the second greatest commandment is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). Then, remember what Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan teaches you about loving your neighbor. Also read 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 John 3:18-19.

Humility

If you are going to attend to the needs and interests of others over your own, you must humble yourself. Remember, this was a central characteristic of Jesus when He chose to leave Heaven and come to this earth (Philippians 2:5-11). You must humble yourself "under the mighty hand of God" (1 Peter 5:6). If you will empty yourself, you will be able to focus on the needs and interests of others. It is when you think you are higher than others that you cannot see their needs and interests (see Luke 18:9-14).

Sacrifice

If you are going to serve in the way we have discussed in this lesson, you must consider that your

earthly life is not about pleasing yourself. You must consider your life to be a life of complete sacrifice to God and accomplishing His interests. Romans 12:1 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (compare also with Galatians 2:20).

Faith

Finally, in order to do all of these things and deny yourself of so much, you must have unwavering faith in the promises of God. You must have full confidence that you will reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7-10). After assuring some Christians that there is victory in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57), Paul wrote, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Conclusion

Are you living the life of a servant? Are you entirely committed to serving God in your life? Are you looking for every opportunity to serve those you come into contact with? Or, are you serving your own interests and desires? Remember, your life is not your own. You have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, you must consider yourself to be the servant of God! One day, you will be judged for how you have served God and others (see Matthew 25:31-46).

Study Questions

1. You Are Called A “Servant”

What does the Greek word “doulos” mean? Give some Bible examples of its use.

What does the Greek word “diakonos” mean? Give some Bible examples of its use.

What principle about being a servant is established in Matthew 6:24? How should you make application of it?

Whose servant are you?

2. Why You Are A Servant Of God

How did you become a servant of God?

What price was paid to redeem you from your sins? How should this impact your service?

What was the ultimate demonstration of Jesus Christ as a servant?

How did Jesus teach the importance of serving?

3. Some You Must Not Serve

What does it mean to serve sin and why must you avoid doing so?

What does it mean to serve mammon and why must you avoid doing so?

What does it mean to serve an idol and why must you avoid doing so?

What does it mean to serve self and why must you avoid doing so?

4. Some You Must Serve

What does it mean to serve God and why must you do so?

What does it mean to serve God's family and why must you do so?

What does it mean to serve your family and why must you do so?

What does it mean to serve all people and why must you do so?

5. Characteristics Needed In A Servant

List some essential characteristics you need in your life if you want to be a servant.