

Lord of Our Service



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Luke 10:38-42, John 13:1-15, Rom. 12:4-8, 1 Cor. 12:28-13:3.*

Memory Text: “‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.’” (*Mark 10:42, 43, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Our Lord Jesus Christ provides the ultimate example of service. He reminds us that “‘the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’” (*Mark 10:45, NKJV*). As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to serve in Jesus' name.

When we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, He invites us to follow in His steps. This is not a call to greatness as the world counts greatness. Rather, it is a call to service. It is a call to have the mind of Christ, who humbled Himself in the form of a servant. Like the disciples, we often find ourselves struggling for the place of honor, the position of authority. But Jesus lovingly reminds us, both in word and in life, “it shall not be so among you” (*Matt. 20:26*).

We are called first and foremost to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then to serve others in Jesus' name. We will serve, not out of compulsion but out of love for Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us. That's the only service that's truly acceptable in His eyes, service born out of a heart of love for God and others.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 17.*

The Example of Jesus (*John 13:1-15*).

Only the apostle John records the story. Not a word from Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Not a single reference in the writings of Peter or Paul. And yet, when you read this story, it reminds you so much of the character of Jesus.

How did the conduct of Jesus in the upper room demonstrate His willingness to serve rather than to be served? *John 13:1-15*.

The foot-washing service is an opportunity for Christians to reaffirm their need for spiritual cleansing through faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Jesus made this point clear when He said “ ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean’ ” (*John 13:10, NKJV*) and “ ‘If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me’ ” (*John 13:8, NKJV*).

However, the foot-washing service is not only an opportunity to say Yes again to Jesus as your Savior and Lord. It is also an act of service. Jesus provided for the disciples, and for each one of us, a perfect example of service. He had every right to sit back and let someone else serve, but Jesus humbled Himself. He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant.

Explore some other incidents in the earthly ministry of Jesus that demonstrate His willingness to serve. What can we learn from these stories about the call to service? *Mark 1:32-34, Luke 9:12-17, John 2:1-12*.

Jesus demonstrated, both in word and deed, that He came to serve rather than to be served. When He calls you to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him; He is calling you to a life of service.

When was the last time you went out of your way to do a service for someone who had no possibility of repaying you, a service that took your time, your money, or both, a service that offered you nothing (at least in tangible goods) in return? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

Our Greatest Service

Of all the good things we can do for others, the greatest is to lead them into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, the One who, at the cross, paid for the sins of every human being. And if we believe that every Christian is commissioned to share this good news of Christ's sacrifice with the world, the question is not whether we should witness to others, but how. Here again, we can learn from the example of Jesus. "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

Dwell on what the Lord's servant wrote above and go through some of the Gospels and note specific examples of where Jesus was doing what she wrote. See, for example, Matt. 12:9-14, Mark 2:15-17, Luke 19:2-7. After you find some examples, answer this question: Even if I can't perform these same kinds of miracles, how can I, nevertheless, minister as Jesus did?

Christ's method of reaching souls, however, took something that many of us, even professed Christians, don't want to give: And that is ourselves. Oftentimes we might be tempted to think that throwing some money in a collection plate for a mission offering or handing out a few flyers for an evangelistic series is enough. And though these acts have their role, they are not the same as mingling with people, spending time with people, and ministering to their needs. To do this we need to give of ourselves in unselfish service. That's not always easy; it takes a painful death to self and a willingness to serve the Lord by serving others. Only through a daily commitment, a daily taking up of our own cross, will we be doing what we could for the Lord through ministering to others. This is the essence of Christian service, and it can open hearts to our message in ways that all the argumentation, Bible studies, and prophecy charts could never do.

Think of individuals within your sphere of influence who need to hear the gospel message. What are some practical ways that you can use Christ's method to reach them? Also, are you willing to make the personal sacrifices needed in order to reach them?

Varieties of Service

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28).

We are all called to share the good news about Jesus Christ with others. This is our greatest service, and we will be effective when we follow Christ’s method for reaching people. It is important to realize, however, that the way in which we serve others will vary, based upon our personality and spiritual gifts. We are not all called to do the same thing. Part of the death to self required for Christian service is being willing to accept just what our gifts and callings are and are not.

Make a list of various forms of service recorded in Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28–13:3. In what ways do you sense the Lord calling you to serve others in His name? Justify your reasons.

When we consider the various ways Christians are called to serve in Jesus’ name, a natural question to ask is this: “In what ways is the Lord calling me to serve?” Every follower of Jesus Christ has to answer that question personally, but here is a process that might be helpful.

- Step 1: Explore the forms of service found in Scripture. The list you just made is not exhaustive. Other forms of service can be found in narrative passages of Scripture.
- Step 2: Experiment with various forms of service. As you serve others in a variety of ways, be attentive to your own thoughts and feelings. When you serve others using the gifts the Lord has given you, you will experience freedom and joy.
- Step 3: Be attentive to the counsel of brothers and sisters in Christ. The Lord frequently uses people either to confirm the fruitfulness of your service or to suggest alternate forms of service that might be more appropriate, based upon the gifts they observe in your life.

How were you able to identify the gifts the Lord has given you? How are you using those gifts in service for others? Might you need to make changes in how you work, or maybe you should be doing something else entirely?

Examples of Service

The New Testament is filled with examples of men and women, boys and girls, who served others in Jesus' name. Some well-known examples include Andrew, when he brought his brother Simon to Jesus (*see John 1:40-42*), and Dorcas, who sewed garments for those in need (*see Acts 9:36-39*).

You may find it interesting and educational to select a book of the Bible and read it entirely, looking for examples of service.

Skim through the book of Acts, which contains numerous examples of service in Jesus' name. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify examples of service you might imitate in your own life. (Or perhaps you might find another book and do the same thing.)

When we serve others in Jesus' name, we are not only following the example of our Lord. We are giving evidence of His transforming presence in our lives. We are no longer self-centered and self-serving. Rather, we find joy in serving others. There is a power in unselfish service for others that no force in the world can negate. Again, for sinful beings who are inherently self-centered and selfish, this doesn't necessarily come easy. Daily surrender to the Lord is crucial.

What's so important, too, is to keep the Cross before your eyes, for here is the greatest example in all the universe of unselfish service for others. As we day by day contemplate the great sacrifice made in our behalf, the spotless Son of God, the One through whom the worlds were made (*see Heb. 1:2*), taking upon Himself the sins of the world, our hearts will be broken. Before the Cross, nothing Christ asks of us will be too much; before the Cross, our service to others will be the least we can do for the God who has said to us, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (*Matt. 25:40*).

Take time to dwell on the sacrifice of Christ, the greatest example possible of unselfish service. How does dwelling on the Cross impact you and your willingness to serve others?

Misguided Service *(Luke 10:38-42)*.

We must be careful not to allow our service in Jesus' name to hinder our relationship with Jesus. Indeed, we need to keep our relationship with Jesus as the center, the foundation, of our desire to serve others. Otherwise, a number of things can happen. For instance, we can become proud, thinking our good works are things we do that add to our salvation, that are meritorious toward our basic acceptance with God.

At the same time, it is possible as followers of Jesus to become so preoccupied with serving others that we have no time to spend with Jesus Himself. A classic example of misguided service is seen when Jesus visited the home of Martha. In many ways, Martha is a model of devotion. She believed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (*see John 11:27*). She was willing to keep trusting, even when she did not see the way (*see John 11:21, 22*). On one occasion, however, when Jesus visited Martha's home in Bethany, she allowed her service to hinder her relationship with Jesus.

How does Martha's preoccupation with "serving Jesus" affect her personally and, consequently, impact her relationship with the Master? *Luke 10:38-42*.

Martha is worried. The verb used here in the Greek (translated as "careful" in the KJV) is a strong one. We find this same verb in Philippians 4:6, where Paul exhorts the believers to "be anxious for nothing" (*NKJV*). We find a variation of the word, as a noun, in 1 Peter 5:7, where Peter appeals to believers to cast all their anxiety, all their cares, upon the Lord. But Martha is holding on to all her anxieties. She is anxious. There is a division and distraction in her mind. She is full of inner turmoil.

Martha is also troubled. The Greek verb (translated "troubled" in the KJV) implies external agitation. Martha is not only full of inner turmoil. She is also externally agitated. Her service for Jesus is misguided. As a result, her relationship with Jesus suffers. Instead of sitting at His feet and experiencing intimate communion with Him, she accosts Him with these words: " 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me' " (*Luke 10:40, 41, NKJV*).

How can we avoid this trap, where our preoccupation with serving in Jesus' name gets in the way of our relationship with Him? Why must we not let anything, even our service for the Lord, hinder that relationship?

Further Study: Another danger Christians face as they serve others in Jesus' name is a spirit of competition. We can easily fall into the trap of comparing ourselves with others or measuring our service against theirs. Consider the following passages of Scripture that address the issue of competition in our service for others: *Luke 9:49, 50; 1 Cor. 1:11-13*. What lessons can we learn from the teaching of Jesus and the attitude of the apostle Paul?

Note: The teaching of Jesus recorded in Matthew 25:31-46 suggests that our service for others is an important indicator of our Christian experience. This account of the dividing of the sheep and the goats suggests that those who are not involved in acts of service to others will be sent away into everlasting punishment. How would you explain this passage in the context of salvation by grace through faith? Are acts of service necessary for salvation? Is it accurate to say that we must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the sick if we expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven?

Discussion Questions:

- 1 A friend tells you she would like to explore ways of serving others in Jesus' name, but she feels her schedule is already overloaded. What counsel would you give her?
- 2 What can you do together, as a class, to reveal to others the caring and serving spirit that should be the hallmark of all who profess to follow Jesus Christ?
- 3 How can we avoid the trap of believing that our service for others somehow earns us merits with God, that somehow good works can add to our salvation?
- 4 What contemporary example of serving others has been most inspirational to you, and why? Discuss.

Mary's Boys

Mary Metobo and J. H. Zachary

In Nairobi, Kenya, thousands of children wander the streets searching for food. Some are orphans of AIDS; others have run away from troubled families or desperate poverty.

Mary Metobo's heart ached to help these children who ate from garbage cans, begged on street corners, or stole to stay alive. When her husband retired, they rented a home outside Nairobi where they could start helping some of these children.

Mary bought foam sheets for beds and a charcoal stove on which to prepare meals. Mary invited 15 boys to come.

Some boys needed drug and alcohol treatment; all needed hope. The boys receive food, shelter, training, and an introduction to Jesus.

With help from a donor, Mary bought utensils and soybeans and found someone to help teach some of the boys to prepare a popular soybean meal. In another room of her home two boys are making metal fencing. A man teaches some boys mechanics. As the youth see benefits of their labor, hope fills their hearts. "For the first time in my life I have hope," smiles a young man holding the welding rod.

One boy has accepted Jesus as his Savior and now serves as the group's chaplain. Each morning the youth study the Bible and pray together.

Mary hopes that after spending six months in her home, the boys will be ready to step out on their own. She plans to help them find work and a nurturing church family. Then she will start over with another group of troubled children. She looks forward to the day when she can buy bunk beds and can double the number of youth she helps.

Sometimes when Mary sends the boys on an errand in the city, they meet their street friends who see that they are living a better life. The friends beg to come to Mary's home, where they can find help and hope. "Not yet," she must tell them. "As soon as we have beds and work opportunities, you can bring your friends here."

Mary hopes that one day soon she can help 100 youth at a time. She wants to help the girls that live on Nairobi's streets as well. "I could train them to work as maids in the homes of the more affluent," Mary says. "Many people would be happy to hire them. But this project will have to wait for some time in the future." Right now she can only pray.

Mary Metobo lives near Nairobi, Kenya; J. H. Zachary was retired from the Ministerial Association at the General Conference.