

Service

ONE WAY OF EXERCISING ourselves toward godliness is through service (often called “ministry”). Many aspects of the Christian life revolve around serving the Lord in some capacity within the church. Unfortunately, service for God often takes a back seat to service for self.

Serving God is not a job for the casually interested or the uncommitted. Service costs time, talents, money, and perhaps even one’s earthly life. God asks believers to make service a high priority. He wants first place, not leftovers. Serving God is not a short-term, temporary, only-if-it’s-convenient proposition. Believers should be willing to invest their entire lives in the service of their Lord.

Note: The primary location or context for ministry is the local church. Believers serve God through the opportunities available within their churches. New Testament ministry is church ministry. There should be no such thing as “Lone Ranger” ministry. One’s church should be the starting point and ending point of all ministries.

There are many areas of service within a church. What are some examples? Usher, SS teacher or helper, Jr. church, setting up for special events, speaking, singing, other music, nursery, office work, etc.

Texts

Deuteronomy 13:4 Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

Psalms 100:2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

Colossians 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.



Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The biblical words for service include *doulos*, meaning “slave” or “bond servant,” and *latreuo*, meaning “to act as a servant.”¹ The word “deacon” is based on the word, *diakonia*, which denotes any kind of service or work in general. Thus, the believer’s service for God is to be from a lowly, humble position, like that of a household servant. Paul often called himself a servant of Jesus Christ.

Truths about Service

Serving God is hard work.

Paul uses words like work, labor, struggle, and energy when talking about ministry (c.f. Eph 4:12; Col 1:29). Many aspects of service are difficult and frustrating. Service will rarely be glorious, nor will hard working servants often be recognized. Ministry is not the place to make much money or gain great popularity. Ministry often requires long hours, low (or no) pay, and few if any discernible results. To persevere in service requires discipline, patience, and faith that one’s labor is not in vain.

Serving God is enduring work.

God sees and acknowledges services rendered on His behalf (1 Cor 15:58). God doesn’t forget our labor (Heb 6:10). Your rewards will be based on service.

Serving God is satisfying work.

For the believer, there’s nothing better than knowing that he has faithfully served his Lord. Ministry often yields a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction

¹ *latreuo* may also be translated “worship.”



that those who don't serve never know. There's an excitement and exhilaration in being used by God.

Reasons God Expects Believers to Serve

to be obedient.

Service is a command. God has called believers to serve Him and to serve others. Lack of service is sin.

to express gratitude for what God has done

1 Samuel 12:24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.

in answer to God's invitation

Isaiah 6:8 I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

1 Timothy 3:1 If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

There's an urgent need for qualified laborers to enter the service of the Lord, both as volunteers and as vocational ministers.

to follow the example of Jesus

John 13:12–14 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

to express godly love for others

Galatians 5:13 By love serve one another.



Limitations on Service

God has designed the church so that certain rolls are to be fulfilled by specific kinds of people. For example, the qualifications for pastors and deacons are set quite high. Many believers simply do not meet the standards and should not serve in those positions. One should not seek to serve in those areas for which he is not qualified. If one has disqualified himself for certain service positions, he should seek other places to serve. Believers must submit themselves to biblical principles of service.

Conclusion

Believers must discipline themselves to participate in the service opportunities that are available to them. The primary context for such service is through the local church. Service for the Lord is often hard work, and the immediate rewards may be lacking. But God has promised great eternal rewards for those who faithfully and humbly serve. Believers should be active in service in order to obey biblical commands, to follow the example of Christ, and to express their love for others. Those not qualified for certain service positions should seek other avenues of service.

For Further Discussion

1. What is the appropriate age for one to begin serving the Lord?

There is no specific age. As soon as one is converted, he can start serving.

2. Why do some people seek areas of service for which they are not qualified?

To be prominent or noticeable; out of pride and rebellion against the policies of the church or the teaching of the Bible.

3. Why is discipline so important in God's service?

Because it takes commitment and perseverance to faithfully carry out one's area of ministry. Ministry is



frequently filled with frustrations and difficulties. To stick with it takes discipline.

4. What are some potential problems associated with a ministry that is not directly associated with a church?

1. The church is God's program for today; hence, it's the proper place to base all ministry. It's biblical. 2. Those ministries not directly associated with a church often are unaccountable and may drift into various problems. 3. Such ministries often become substitutes for churches, drawing away both workers and financial support that should be directed toward a legitimate church.

