



transform transform
discipleship mentoring discipleship mentoring

Obeying Christ - Making Disciples

“Go therefore and make disciples...”

Matthew 28:19



LEVEL TWO

transform transform
discipleship mentoring discipleship mentoring

ENGAGING

Transformed Character

MANAGING YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE



transform transform
discipleship mentoring discipleship mentoring

6

**A Discipleship Ministry Resource Provided by
Faith Assembly of God**

254 Spackenkill Rd., Poughkeepsie NY
(845) 462-5955

Be Wise & Manage Well

Worthy of Trust - A disciple is a good steward of all entrusted to them

Main Truth: A disciple who is kingdom minded is spiritually sharp and uses good judgment when it comes to the faithful use and entrustment of all resources, including the lives of other people.

Read Luke 16: 1-13 read it carefully and slowly!

I will always remember a saying that goes like this: "You are in the World, but you must not be like the world." What this means for the believer is that there must be an effort, with the help of the spirit, to put to death our worldly ways. One of the truths that one must be aware of from the start of their Christian life is that the world is hostile to kingdom standards. What the Bible encourages us to do often conflicts with the way people of the world live their lives.

How are we to live in the world and not be of the World? Well for starters let's look at the words of Jesus in John 17:15 - "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. The goal therefore is to insulate not isolate ourselves from the world. If we isolate ourselves from the world, we remove our light from it. To be insulated from the world will allow us to be in it but not of it. This way we are protected from it while we are in it as an influence of light (Matthew 5:14). Yes, if we were to look at both sides of the coin, being insulated does not exempt us from criticism, temptation or failure but does provide opportunities to succeed as disciples, whereas, being isolated from the world guarantees failure in advancing the Kingdom of God. The biblical teaching from scripture calls us to be separated from sin and live for God, not from sinners and to a life of self-righteousness. If we are ever to recover lost souls from the clutches of the devil, it is going to involve personal involvement, not detachment. Involvement also means moving out of our comfort zones to mix freely with the people so that they just might see our good works and glorify God (Matthew 5:16). Here are a few more areas to consider when being wise and managing your life well:

1. **Being trustworthy.** Can people trust you? Are you a person of integrity? Honesty, compassionate, confidentiality, loyal, and dependable are qualities that surround someone who is trustworthy. Show me someone with these qualities and I will show you someone who will eventually be entrusted with great responsibility.
2. **Being trustworthy with material possessions.** Verse 11 in Luke 16 is clear. Spiritual responsibility is seldom given to anyone who hasn't been faithful with material possessions. Only people who manage worldly resources faithfully can handle responsibility for the care of people's souls and lives. Read the story of the life Joseph (Genesis 39-50) and see how this principle plays out. His faithfulness with Egypt's material wealth qualified him to be entrusted with God's greater riches....His people!

**Managing
Your Christian Life**
Level 2 Lesson 6

ENGAGE

Transformed Character

- 3. **We are managers, not owners of our possessions.** The sooner we accept this truth the better. Otherwise we will be in constant competition with God and His Will for our lives. The tithe, which is Gods, is a reminder that He is the owner and we are the manager of all the money that we are entrusted. When we give, it shows and demonstrates our understanding of this principle. The rule for Israel should be the rule we all implement in our lives , “the first and the best.” Being godly outside of our salvation by the blood of Christ, involves an understanding that our lives and what we have been blessed and entrusted with is all His and we are simply stewards. Let’s be good ones!
- 4. **We cannot serve Money and God;** it’s one or the other. Whatever we devote ourselves to ends up becoming our god. That means that whatever we choose over another, we despise! “Despise” defined in the Webster’s dictionary: “to regard as negligible, worthless or distasteful.” Perhaps this is why the Pharisee and Jesus did not see eye to eye (v.14). Let’s be people who understand the role of money in life and serve God wholehearted with it!

As you grow and nurture your relationship with Christ, you should be able to keep the balance of maintaining your integrity and walk with Jesus and be able to shine your light wherever you are, whether at church, in the company of family and relatives or in the environment of your workplace (places where the temptation to sin is abound). Remember, where sin abounds, grace abounds greater (Romans 5:20). Only people who are **in the world and insulated** , really in, but not of the world are disciples whom Christ can trust with the spiritual responsibility to be his ambassadors of reconciliation in this out of control and hostile world.

Share Time: Take some time with your mentee/mentor and discuss how you can better be an ambassador for Christ and pray with each other in areas where more grace is necessary in your walk and witness for Him.

God bless and have a fantastic day!

Confronting Sin & Being Accountable

A Christ-like disciple is accountable in spiritual advancement

Main Truth: A disciple is accountable to a spiritual mentor or a trusted friend with the understanding that "confrontation of sin" in each other's life is the necessary path in advancing spiritual growth and the kingdom of God.

Read Luke 17:1-10 read it carefully and slowly!

Let me begin by saying that having a spiritual mentor is a key to effective accountability and a very rewarding and enriching experience.

An accountability commitment exists to help you and your accountability person to stay pure and faithful in your walk with Christ and to help you overcome sin. This relationship provides an opportunity to live out the scripture in James 5:16, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

Here are just a few of the benefits and blessings that come with a spiritual accountable relationship.

1. It helps you in submitting every part of your life to God's will.
2. It keeps you accountable to acting in a holy way. As you continually submit your life to God, God grows your character and you mature in your walk with Christ.
3. It will safeguard you against adulterous relationships and lustful habits, by bringing into the open your behavior. If you start going down a dangerous path, your accountability person can call you to account and to right choices.

Richard Exley, former pastor and Christian author, says,

"Temptation flourishes in the dark, but it withers and dies when it is brought into the light of accountability."

(Man of Valor)

4. It will provide a regular time of encouragement and prayer for you whether you're facing a trial or preparing to make a critical decision.

This is critical as you intentionally grow in your walk with Christ! You must have someone who has permission to speak into your life... blessing or a face to face talk about sin.

May God bless you as you seek to establish a spiritual accountable relationship! PJ

8 Principles in Seeking Spiritual Accountability

article by Ken Reed

If you want accountability in your life, you've got to take responsibility.

Nobody will do that for you. Others can pour into you, teach you, model for you, and share resources with you. But if you want accountability, you've got to take that responsibility on yourself. I've asked people to help me with certain aspects of my spiritual life. Sometimes it's "worked." Many times, it hasn't. But I've learned some principles along the way that have helped ensure success.

1. Ask for it.

If you don't ask, nobody will respond. You need these deep relationships that help you with your personal spiritual growth

2. Help define what it needs to look like.

Don't just assume that if you ask someone, they'll instantly know what accountability needs to look like for you. You have to help set the parameters. How often? What will you talk about? What questions should they ask you?

3. Be vulnerable and share your story.

Otherwise, how can someone else help? If they don't know who you are, where you've been, and the weak spots in your life, they'll have no idea how to help you grow.

4. Take a risk.

You'll never know if the person on the other end, that you're asking to step into that relationship with you, is 100% trustworthy. This is a step of faith, not a step of pre-knowledge.

5. Remember that accountability is a two-way street.

This isn't a cure-all solution. You've got to be doing the difficult task of working on yourself and your own shortcomings. Having someone "hold you accountable" doesn't assure you're accountable. You've got to continue to actively pursue that relationship, and be open and honest with where you are at all along the way.

6. Give the other person the room to say, “No.”

This is a big responsibility that you’re asking someone to. Give them the freedom to say that this is not the right season for them. Forced accountability rarely works. Both parties have to be willing to step in and do the hard work.

7. You have to continue to drive the relationship.

Don’t expect that you can ask once, share your story, and the other person will then magically follow up with you exactly when you need it. You’re the one asking for accountability. You need to be the one driving this relationship.

transform transform
discipleship mentoring discipleship mentoring

8. Ask for grace.

Since accountability isn’t a cure-all, there’s a good chance you’ll mess up again in a big way. And this is where many “accountability partners” fall apart. If you’ve messed up, and think, “I can’t possibly be honest about this with him now.” And he’ll think, “I guess I’ve failed at holding him accountable.” What needs to happen is what happened in the beginning: grace. Set out from the beginning this idea that if failure happens, grace is the knee-jerk response.

You need someone to spur you on. (Hebrews 10:24) You’re too weak on your own to fight sin, insecurities, and the battles that rage against you doing what God’s calling you to do. You need someone who’s got your back. You need someone who is going to encourage you on the good days and the bad. ***You need a warrior who won’t give up on you, who knows where you’re headed, and is willing to walk through the dark and the light to help you get there.***

transform transform
discipleship mentoring discipleship mentoring

So encourage each other and build each other up!

discipleship mentoring **– 1 Thessalonians 5:11** discipleship mentoring

Living in Light of Christ's Return

A disciple lives ready with a sense of Christ soon return

Main Truth: A disciple lives and works with a sense an urgency and anticipation of their Lord's soon return that may take place at any moment.

Main Truth: A disciple's mission is accomplished by the power of the Word that **Read Luke 21:5-36 read it carefully and slowly!**

As we read, study and implement biblical truths and principles in our lives, we will notice that His does take on a special newness that results in the blessings of God. Although this may be a great experience of our new faith in God, it also carries with it a potential danger of looking back and losing sight of what's ahead. Yes, we can get caught up in the blessings and forget about the soon coming of Christ and the many souls yet to be saved. So, how do we live? Good question! Let see how the people from "gotquestions.com" answer this one. **"How are we to live our lives in light of Christ's return?"**

Answer: We believe that the return of Jesus Christ is imminent, that is, His return could occur at any moment. We, with the apostle Paul, look for "the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13)

Knowing that the Lord could come back today, some are tempted to stop what they are doing and just "wait" for Him. However, there is a big difference between knowing that Jesus could return today and knowing that He will return today. Jesus said, "No one knows about that day or hour" (Matthew 24:36).

The time of His coming is something God has not revealed to anyone, and so, until He calls us to Himself, we should continue serving Him. In Jesus' parable of the ten talents, the departing king instructs his servants to "occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13 KJV). The return of Christ is always presented in Scripture as a great motivation to action, not as a reason to cease from action.

In 1 Corinthians 15:58, Paul wraps up his teaching on the rapture by saying, "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord." In 1 Thessalonians 5:6, Paul concludes a lesson on Christ's coming with these words: "So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled." To retreat and "hold the fort" was never Jesus' intention for us. Instead, we work while we can. "Night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4). The apostles lived and served with the idea that Jesus could return within their lifetime; what if they had ceased from their labors and just "waited"? They would have been in disobedience to Christ's command to "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15), and the gospel would not have been spread. The apostles understood that Jesus' imminent return meant they must busy themselves with God's work. They lived life to the fullest, as if every day were their last. We, too, should view every day as a gift and use it to glorify God. – gotquestion.com

Loving the Second Coming and the Assurance of Salvation

article by **John Piper**

Hebrews 9:28 - Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await him.

In my **recent message** on this text I asked, “How can we be sure that our sins are forgiven and that we will be safe in the judgment?” It says that Christ “has been offered once to bear the sins of *many*.” How can I know I am among the “*many*”? It also says that Christ “shall appear a second time *for salvation*.” How can I know that this refers to *my* salvation?

I answered: The “many” are defined at the end of the verse. The “many” are “those who eagerly await him.” These are the ones Christ is coming to save. And he is coming to save them because he has “borne” their sins.

The first time he came to deal with sin. The second time he is coming, not to deal with sin, but to save us from the wrath of God’s judgment. The first time he came to purchase our salvation by bearing our sins. The second time he comes to apply our salvation by shielding us from the wrath of God. **Hebrews 10:27** describes the “judgment” the writer has in mind, namely, “a certain terrifying expectation of *judgment*, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.” This is what Christ is coming the second time to save us from. Christ *bought* the first time what he *gives* the second time—safety in the judgment.

Now the question before us all is: Are we included in the “many” whose sins he bore? And will we be saved by his coming “for salvation”? The answer of **Hebrews 9:28** is, **“Yes,” if we are “eagerly awaiting him.”** We can know that our sins are taken away and that we will be safe in the judgment *if we trust Christ in such a way that it makes us eager for his coming.*

There is a phony faith that claims to believe in Christ, but is only a fire insurance policy. Phony faith “believes” only to escape hell. It has no real desire for Christ. In fact, it would prefer if he not come, so that we can have as much of this world’s pleasures as possible. This shows that a heart is not with Christ, but with the world. That is not saving faith. “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (**Matthew 10:37**).

So the issue for us is: Do we eagerly long for the coming of Christ? Do we want to see his kingdom established and do we want to be reunited to him in closer personal fellowship? Or do we want him to wait while our love affair with the world runs its course? That is the question that tests the authenticity of faith. So let us be like the Corinthians who were “awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (**1 Corinthians 1:7**), and like the Philippians whose “citizenship was in heaven, from which also [they] eagerly waited for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (**Philippians 3:20**).

And let us remember the words of Paul in **2 Timothy 4:8** that “there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to *all who have loved his appearing*.” That’s the issue for us. Do we love his appearing? Or do we love the world and hope that his appearing will not interrupt our worldly plans? Eternity hangs on this question. What is your answer?

Longing for the Lord with you,

Pastor John

My prayer is that this article has either enlightened you or reminded you of our precious Lord’s return. Let’s be united in anticipation of this marvelous hope and be ready when he sounds the trumpet and calls your name.

God bless you richly my friend in Christ! PJ

Take some time to discuss with your mentee/mentor how each of you can improve your status of where your heart is regarding your anticipation and eagerness of Christ’s return.

Notes:

Achieving Greatness & Selfless Serving
A Christ-like disciple is a selfless servant

Main Truth: A kingdom disciple exercises a selfless spirit of servanthood and humility as a foundation of true leadership.

Main Truth: A disciple's mission is accomplished by the power of the Word that **Read Luke 22:24-30 read it carefully and slowly!**

Competition, first place, champion, and rivalry are all so common words that **Read Luke 10:1-24 read it carefully and slowly!** even the most of us want to get the best of it. For those of us who like to win or think highly of ourselves, top spot is the only option.

Well, I don't mean to burst anyone's bubble, but God's kingdom runs on a different standard. In Luke 22 Jesus lays out for us a simple standard for those who are greatest in his sight and kingdom. Let's get to the point. God doesn't call us to a position; he calls us to serve in whatever position. A Christ-like kingdom disciple is called only for the purpose of serving, not for personnel advancement or the increase of power, status, or wealth.

David E. Schroeder says it this way: "God's kingdom flow chart is inverted. The real leader is the one who best serves the rest because he or she accepted the responsibility for their welfare."

Take a moment to discuss with your mentee/mentor the different obstacles that may stand in the way of you being a Christ-like servant.

Notes:

Handwriting practice lines with decorative paper boat icons.

In God's kingdom, people become the focus of ministry and the spirit of humility the pathway of our effectiveness in ministering. The environment that we must set should consist of an example of Christ-like selflessness and a commitment to growing people in spiritual maturity.

I have attached an awesome paper on this subject matter. It really is worth the read. It will assist you and open your eyes to great teaching that is seldom spoken about or taught in churches today. **Blessings! PJ**

DAY
8

DAY
9

Who's the Greatest?

By Steven J. Cole
Luke 22:24-30

Former world heavyweight boxing champ, Muhammad Ali, was known for often bragging, "I'm the greatest." Just before take-off on an airline flight, the stewardess reminded Ali to fasten his seatbelt. "Superman don't need no seatbelt," Ali told her. The stewardess retorted, "Superman don't need no airplane, either." Ali fastened his seatbelt. (*The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes*, ed. by Clifton Fadimon [Little, Brown] p. 14.)

No one would mistake Muhammad Ali's braggadocio as a Christian virtue. Humility and selflessness are to mark the believer in Jesus Christ. Since we all know this, it seems incredible that the apostles would get into this silly debate over which of them was the greatest, especially when you consider the setting: the Last Supper, the night before Jesus would go to the cross. The Lord had just announced that one of the twelve would betray Him. The disciples had responded by discussing who would do such a thing, and with each one asking, "Surely, not I?" (Mark 14:19). Perhaps this led someone to say, "I know that I'm not a likely candidate." Someone else said, "Me, neither!" Another said, "Well, it couldn't be me?" "Why not? Do you think you're better than the rest of us?" From there, things heated up quickly.

This wasn't the first time that the twelve had gotten into this sort of silly debate. They had argued about the same matter while they walked at some distance from Jesus, thinking that He couldn't hear what they were discussing (Mark 9:33-37). But He knew what they were discussing and used the occasion to teach them about childlike humility. On another occasion, the mother of James and John had come to Jesus to ask that her sons could sit on His right and left in the kingdom. The other disciples were indignant (Mark 10:35-45). What right had these two brothers to claim the top spots in the kingdom? Jesus taught them that the greatest should become the servant and the one who wished to be first should be the slave of all, adding, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." But in spite of these repeated lessons, here they were again, right on the eve of the Lord's death, arguing over which of them was the greatest!

This shows us that although we can have this lesson in our heads, it takes a while to put it into practice. We just think that we've learned it once and for all when someone does something to bug us and we think, "I'm a better servant of Christ than he is!" Although we may not get into a verbal debate, the thought of our heart is, "I'm greater than he is!" So we all have to keep coming back to this fundamental lesson:

The greatest in God's sight are those who humbly serve.

This is a lesson that all who are actively serving Christ must continually apply. But it also applies to Christians who are sitting on the bench, not engaged in serving the Lord. The Bible clearly teaches that every believer has been given at least one spiritual gift and is to employ it in serving one another (1 Pet. 4:10).

Being a servant of Christ is more than just signing up to teach Sunday School or to do some other job at the church. Being a servant is a mindset, where each day you make yourself available to Christ and ask Him to use you in His service in whatever ways He chooses. It may be to speak a word about the Savior to someone who needs Him. It may be to offer cheerful help to someone in need. It may be to listen to a person who needs sympathy or understanding. But whatever the job, your daily attitude is, "Lord, here I am. Use me as Your servant." If you're not living in that way, then you are living for self, not for Christ.

Our text brings out four important lessons in servanthood:

1. **The great example of servanthood: Jesus Christ**

Although Luke presumably did not know about and thus did not record the event, John 13:1-11 reports that at sometime during the Supper, Jesus got up, girded Himself with a towel, took a basin of water, and washed the disciples' feet. I don't know for sure where in the chronology that great object lesson took place, but I would think that it happened after the dispute among the disciples and just before Jesus' verbal lesson recorded here (*i.e.*, between verses 24 and 25). Or, it could have followed verse 27, where Jesus states, "I am among you as the one who serves." But at any rate, Jesus is the great example of servanthood. Note four things:

A. Jesus faithfully served although He alone deserves eternal supremacy.

Have you ever gone out at night and looked into the sky and thought about the fact that your eye cannot even begin to see the billions of galaxies and stars that are in the universe? With my binoculars, I have at times been able to locate Andromeda galaxy, which is 200 million light years from the earth. It is composed of 200 million suns brighter than our sun. But it is just one of millions of other galaxies. Even the powerful Hubble telescope cannot get to the end of the universe. And Jesus spoke the entire works into existence by the word of His power!

Peter, James, and John got a brief glimpse of Jesus' glory on the Mount of Transfiguration and they were awestruck (Luke 9:28-36). Later, on the Isle of Patmos, John, who had laid his head on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper, got a further revelation of Christ in His heavenly glory. His response was not to say, "Oh, hi, Lord, good to see you again!" Rather, he fell on his face at Christ's feet as a dead man (Rev. 1:12-17).

This Lord of glory left the splendor of heaven and took on human flesh so that He could accomplish our salvation. He rightly could have come in all His splendor, demanding our instant allegiance on penalty of death. But instead He took on the form of a servant and humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:5-8).

Christ's willingness to serve did not in any way rob Him of the ultimate authority that will be His. He states here, "My Father has granted Me a kingdom" (22:29). He is coming again and He will conquer all His enemies and reign over all the earth. But in God's sovereign plan, although He deserves and one day will have ultimate supremacy, the first time He came to earth as a humble servant to show us how we should serve Him and one another. If Jesus, who deserved supremacy as the Almighty Creator, willingly served, then should not we, who deserve nothing except judgment, offer ourselves in faithful service to God?

B. Jesus faithfully served through many trials and temptations.

Jesus tells the disciples, “And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials” (22:28). At first glance, this verse does not seem unusual. We all know that Jesus was tried when the devil tempted Him in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13). We know that He went through the awful trial of Gethsemane, followed by His trial and crucifixion. But we tend to think that between those two terrible events, everything was smooth sailing for Jesus. But, the disciples were not standing with Jesus during these two events. He had not yet chosen them when He was tempted by Satan. And, they all fled and deserted Him at His final hour of trial. So Jesus is referring to trials or temptations that took place in the time in between these two recorded times of trial.

After Jesus had successfully resisted the devil in the wilderness, we read that the devil “departed from Him until an opportune time” (4:13). Although Jesus did not have a sin nature tempting Him from within, as we do, He was perpetually bombarded from without by the great enemy of our souls. If Satan could bring Jesus down, God’s plan of salvation would be thwarted. Although it was impossible for the Son of God to sin, it was no mock battle that He fought. Satan continually dangled before Jesus ways to escape the cross. He tempted Him to exert His power and assert His authority apart from God’s plan. But in spite of all these temptations, Jesus faithfully humbled Himself and served the Father’s purpose, even to the point of death.

There are many Christians who will serve God as long as there is no opposition and things are going relatively smoothly. But what about when criticism or opposition comes? What about when we are treated unfairly? What about when we are misunderstood or when people question our motivation? Do we keep serving then or do we quit with the protest, “If that’s the kind of treatment I get for serving, I’m out of here! Let someone else serve!” Jesus is our great example of serving faithfully through many trials.

C. Jesus faithfully served though lonely and misunderstood.

Although the disciples had stood with Jesus up to this point, even through some intense opposition, Jesus knew that in a short while they would all forsake Him and flee for their lives. Even now, not even Peter, James, or John could enter into the anguish that Jesus would face in the garden. They just didn’t get it. Jesus had to face His final trial alone. But, as He told them in that Upper Room, “Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me” (John 16:32).

Commenting on what he calls Jesus’ profound loneliness, Alexander Maclaren states, “The more pure and lofty a nature, the more keen its sensitiveness, the more exquisite its delights, and the sharper its pains. The more loving and unselfish a heart, the more its longing for companionship: and the more its aching in loneliness” (*Exposition of Holy Scripture* [Baker], Luke 13-24, p. 237). As the psalmist wrote prophetically of Christ, “Reproach has broken my heart, and I am so sick. And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none” (Ps. 69:20).

Yet in spite of loneliness and being misunderstood, Jesus faithfully served the Father's purpose. His fellowship with the Father was the sustaining factor when no one else understood. In this, too, Jesus is our great example. We are called to serve Him even when we feel lonely and misunderstood.

D. Jesus faithfully served because of His great love for us.

Christ's amazing love is the only explanation for why He would leave the glory of heaven and submit Himself to all of the abuse and hardship He went through to secure our salvation. Just before Jesus girded Himself with that towel and began the lowly servant's task of washing the disciples' feet, John 13:1 states that Jesus loved His own who were in the world and that He loved them to the uttermost.

The apostle Paul was driven by this same love of Christ. He said that the life he now lived in the flesh, he lived by faith in the Son of God, and then he adds, "who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). In that great eighth chapter of Romans, Paul reaches a crescendo when he reflects on God's great love in Christ. He states that even if we are put to death for Christ's sake, "we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." Nothing, he states, absolutely nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:35-39).

Just as Christ served because of His great love for us and Paul served because he was captivated by Christ's love, so we should serve because of Christ's love for us and our love for Him. God's love as seen in Christ, and especially in His sacrificial death, is the great motive for anything and everything we do in service for Him. Jesus Christ is our great example of servanthood.

2. The great enemy of servanthood: Self

The disciples' squabble came from one source: self! James 4:1 asks, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?" He answers, "Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?" Selfish desire leads us into conflict with one another. That is why Jesus spells out the beginning requirement if we wish to follow Him: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). But denying self isn't a once and for all decision that we make and then get on with life. Self keeps rearing its ugly head, even in those who have tried to kill the monster for years! So even the most mature saints constantly have to do battle with self.

A. Self reveals itself in pride.

You would think that right after the Lord's Supper, this sort of dispute among these men would not have happened, but it did. Pride and selfishness (which are related) are the most common and troubling problems we face. In the next section, Peter's pride comes through as he protests that he is ready to die with Jesus. Peter believed in his own commitment more than he believed Jesus' word! If these men who had walked in close relationship with Christ could fall into the pride of proclaiming their own greatness right after the Lord's Supper, then we are not immune!

One of the most remarkable deceptions that the enemy has pulled off is to infect the church with the notion that we are supposed to build up our self-esteem! It has swept into the church in the past 30 years. J. C. Ryle, for example, who wrote in the 19th century, viewed self-esteem as a deep-rooted evil. He comments, "Ambition, self-esteem, and self-conceit lie deep at the bottom of all men's hearts, and often in the hearts where they are least suspected" (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* [Baker], Luke 11-24, p. 403). ** However, let's be careful not to error regarding worldly "self-esteem" where the focus is "self" vs. when an individual seeks to build up themselves in the Lord by gaining a greater understanding of who they are in Christ and what they are able to do through Him. – Pastor John*

John Calvin, who tipped me off to my own errors on this matter, frequently warns against the evil of self-love. He says, "There is, indeed, nothing that man's nature seeks more eagerly than to be flattered. Accordingly, when his nature becomes aware that its gifts are highly esteemed, it tends to be unduly credulous about them." He goes on to say that "blind self-love is innate in all mortals," and because of this, "when anyone publicly extolled human nature in most favorable terms, he was listened to with applause." He warns that if we listen to "the sort of alluring talk that tickles the pride that itches in [our] very marrow," we will not advance in true self-knowledge, "but will be plunged into the worst ignorance" (*The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. by John McNeill [Westminster], 2:1:2).

So, rather than pouring the gasoline of self-esteem on our propensity toward pride, we must, in the words of Isaac Watts, "pour contempt on all our pride" if we want to be servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Self reveals itself in competition.

"I'm the greatest apostle!" "You are not! I am!" "You guys are both wrong. I'm the greatest!" The apostles were doing what men by nature are prone to do, competing for first place. Our American culture is especially competitive. That's how you get scholarships, get into college, and get good grades, by doing better than other students. That's how you get ahead in business, by competing with others for customers. That's how sports teams win championships, by competing and conquering the opposing teams. We live in a climate of competition!

I noticed this last fall when I was traveling in Poland. The main roads there are two lane roads and you frequently encounter horse-drawn carts and slow cars or trucks. Sometimes our driver would pull out to pass and I could see that we weren't going to make it. There just wasn't enough time to pass before the oncoming vehicle would hit us head on! In America, you wouldn't dare to try such a thing. I've even had drivers that I was trying to pass speed up, forcing me to drop back behind them. But in Poland, everyone just sort of moves to the side and you pass three abreast. They cooperate rather than compete! A couple of times since then, I've been tempted to try that here, but I instantly realize that it would be suicide! In the church, I think we need to work at cooperation and to be careful not to compete. Is another church doing better than ours? If they preach the gospel, praise God! It means that our team is doing well!

C. Self is modeled for us in worldly leadership.

Jesus describes worldly leadership, where the top man lords it over others but then demands the title of "Benefactor"! But then He states, "But not so with you" (22:26).

Worldly leadership is not a model for biblical leadership. Biblical leadership does not lord it over people, even though at times it must exercise authority (1 Pet. 5:3; Titus 2:15). Biblical leadership does not demand recognition and status. It does not pay attention to titles. It does not use its position for personal advantage at others' expense. In all these areas, worldly leadership models selfish men seeking selfish advantage. Biblical leadership models servanthood, even at personal sacrifice or inconvenience.

Thus our great example of servanthood is Jesus Himself. Our great enemy of servanthood is self.

3. The great encouragement to servanthood: Christ's grace in spite of our sins.

Even though Jesus must have been grieved over this repeated petty quarreling among the apostles, and even though He knew that they all would soon forsake Him and flee, He gives them this gracious word of commendation, that they have stood with Him in His trials. And He goes on to encourage them by promising great rewards for them in His coming kingdom. Truly, as John 1:16 puts it, we have all received "grace upon grace"!

If you have failed the Lord in your attempts to serve Him, He wants you to hear His word of grace. He wants you to turn from your sin and failure and to serve Him again with a glad heart. He's like a father who is trying to teach his young child to do some new task. The child may fail or not do it perfectly, but the dad sees one little thing the child does right and says, "That's the way! Keep it up! You're getting the idea!" As I think of my own ministry, I am overwhelmed that God allowed me to begin shepherding His flock when He did. I am appalled at some of the things I taught and at some of the stupid mistakes I made. Even now, I often wonder how He can use me. But God's grace encourages me to go on.

4. The great enjoyment of servanthood: To have fellowship and service with Christ throughout eternity.

Christ here promises the disciples (the Greek word implies a covenant) that they will eat and drink at His table in His kingdom and they will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. In light of their recent dispute and in light of their impending failures, that is sheer grace! The fact is, the Lord will reward every one of His servants far beyond what we deserve! No one will get to heaven and think, "You mean I sacrificed and worked so hard for this measly reward?" Rather, we all will think, "God has been far more gracious and generous with me than I could ever deserve!"

I don't know for sure what the Lord means in terms of the apostles' future rewards. Paul says that the saints will judge both the world and the angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3). Apparently the apostles will have a leading role in that task. Eating and drinking at Jesus' table is a picture of the joyous fellowship that awaits all of us in His presence. If we could see now what He has prepared for us then, we all would be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that [our] toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Any inconvenience or hardship you endure now in serving Christ will reap blessing upon blessing in that great day when His kingdom comes.

Conclusion

I read about a church in Santa Fe, New Mexico, that has a hand-lettered sign over the only door into the sanctuary: **SERVANTS' ENTRANCE**. There isn't any way in or out of that church except through the service door (*Christianity Today* [9/16/91], p. 42). That's how every church should be! It's a place for servants only. Who's the greatest in God's kingdom? Those who humbly serve as Jesus did.

By Steven Cole

May the Lord bless you and keep you strong. May his grace enable you to continue your life and transformation. My prayer is that you stay close to Jesus and walk in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit!



transform
discipleship mentoring

Rev. John W. Ogden
Discipleship Pastor



transform
discipleship mentoring



transform
discipleship mentoring



transform
discipleship mentoring



transform
discipleship mentoring



transform
discipleship mentoring