

The Fundamentals

Lesson 5 – Serving The Lord

Ephesians 2:10

Invest yourself in prayer before you start today’s lesson. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and guide you, to give you wisdom and to teach you from his word. Then ask him to show you what it is you are to receive from him today as you study his word and learn what it means to serve the Lord.

Now open your Bible.

The first four lessons of this study focused on the fundamentals of the Christian life relating to the “inside” of us. We started with *quiet time*, which is the building of the environment where we can meet God. Then our lessons focused on *meditating on God’s word, praying according to God’s word* and *worshiping in God’s word*. These three fundamentals are the things that transform us on the inside. In this lesson we are moving from the “inside” fundamentals to the fundamentals that transform us on the “outside” – not superficially, but meaning they transform us by the things we do. The next three fundamentals will focus on the “outer” fundamentals of a Christian’s life – activities that are to be fundamental in a Christian’s life.

This lesson will focus on *servicing* the Lord, and, as with all the other lessons previous, there is no way we can exhaust all there is to study on the topic of serving the Lord. So again, this lesson will be limited. The goal of this entire study on the fundamentals is to give us an overview; to introduce the fundamentals to us so that we can join with a spiritual mentor (or be one) to figure out how to practice these fundamentals (or enhance them).

Let’s start off by answering these three questions:

- 1) Who is called to serve the Lord? _____
- 2) Where are we called to serve the Lord?

- 3) How are we called to serve the Lord?

Now let’s spend the rest of this lesson checking our answers with how God would have us answer these questions according to his word.

Write out Ephesians 2:10

If you are a Christian today, saved by God's grace, you are saved for today. We know that this life is temporal and fleeting (James 4:14; Job 8:9; Psalm 39:4; Psalm 103:15-16) and soon to vaporize. We know our salvation is for eternity. But did you know that God's eternity is occurring in our lives today? Where we live today (though everything, including our circumstances) are fleeting and going to change, where we are at today is still part of eternity. From God's perspective, you are in his eternity right now. So, if we are saved, we are saved for a purpose today.

One such purpose is found in Ephesians 2:10. Write out in your own words what God's purpose is according to this scripture:

Here's a little poem that you may recognize:

ONLY ONE LIFE
T WILL SOON BE PAST
ONLY WHAT'S DONE FOR CHRIST
WILL LAST

The point is this: today we are in eternity. Today we have the ability to do something eternal. However, only what's done for Christ will last. Let's use God's word to teach us those things that are of him that will last.

So with that ringing in our ears, the first question we answered at the beginning of this lesson was **who is called to serve the Lord?** The answer is EVERYONE. If you are saved today, you are called to serve the Lord.

Did you notice in Ephesians 2:10 that it says we were **CREATED** to serve the Lord? Some versions use the word workmanship (poema). "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works ..." We are God's poema. His poem. We are his work of art. We are his workmanship and have been created in Christ Jesus for a purpose.

What purpose is found in Ephesians 2:10? _____

God created us to do good works! That's an excellent purpose. If you struggle with trying to figure out and understand what your purpose in life is; God set it out loud and clear in Ephesians 2:10.

Read the end of Ephesians 2:10. When did God prepare these good works for us to do?

God is sovereign and all knowing. He prepared in ADVANCE those these we were created to do. The Alpha and Omega (the Beginning and the End) knows full well what works we are to be doing and when we are to do them. It's our responsibility to be faithful, available, and teachable to do such good works.

God prepared these good works in advance so that we should walk in them. In the New Testament the word "walk" means order your steps. Paul, writing Ephesians, says in 2:10, "We are God's work of art; his workmanship. We have been created in Christ Jesus for good works so that we should walk in them. That we should order our steps by good works that God created us for in Christ Jesus." That's a very clear purpose for our lives as a Christian.

Really, the most exciting thing a Christian can do, the most fulfilling life a Christian can have is doing what God created us to do and to be who God created us to be. We are fulfilled when we are doing what God created us to do. We are fulfilled when we are becoming who God created us to be in Christ. As we are becoming his workmanship, his work of art, his poema, we are satisfied. When we are doing what God made us to do, when we are becoming who God made us to become, there is nothing in this world that can satisfy and please us more.

Read Philippians 2:1-8.

In verses 2-4, how are we to be like-minded with Christ?

How should our ATTITUDES be the same as Christ Jesus (v. 5-7)?

Jesus is our perfect example of a servant. We are called to be God's workmanship and to be like-minded. We are to do nothing out of selfish ambition but in humility consider others over self, looking out for the interest of others above ours. Our attitudes should be like Jesus, who humbled himself to be a servant, to be obedient to death on the cross. Our

service of others may never require us to die on a cross; but it definitely does require us to die to ourselves daily and to serve others. We were created for such a purpose. You are a beautiful piece of art; a poem of grand eloquence. Let the world see the art in you as you glorify God by living out your created purpose to serve the Lord.

Here's another exciting truth: God called us to be a part of what he is doing. We are his workmanship. God has called us to be a part of a building that he is building. God is building something in our midst and he has called us to be a part of it. That's a pretty big deal.

Write out 1 Peter 2:5 (NLT)

We are living stones that God is building into a spiritual temple. What's more we are his holy priest. This verse is written to every single believer. We are his holy priest. We are a living stone that God is building into a spiritual temple.

Look at the last part of verse 5 (NLT). What is it that we are to offer?

Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, we are to offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. Do you recall in lesson 4 we were challenged to memorize Romans 12:1 where Paul beseeches us to become a living sacrifice, to be a spiritual sacrifice? 1 Peter 2:5 is saying the same thing; we are to offer spiritual sacrifices to allow God to use us to build what he's building in our midst.

Do you want to be used by God? Well, he wants to use you to be a part of what he's doing around you. In fact, he's created you for that very purpose. Your life is a holy priest and your life can be an offering to God.

The truth of the matter is that our life is either an offering to the altar of self or the altar of God. It's a high and holy calling to make our lives an offering to the God of the Universe. It's the highest calling. It's not reserved just for professionals, it's not reserved just for people with position or full time vocational ministry. It's for all believers.

Here's a hard core truth: You have not been saved so God can help you build what you're building. God is not saying "That thing you want, I'm here for you. I just want to help you do what you want to do. I want to help you build. I just want to come behind you and be your support." God does want to support you, but you were saved to help God build

what he's building. You weren't saved so God can help you build what you are building. We get it backwards. We were saved to be part of a spiritual temple - a living temple, where spiritual sacrifices are made to God. We were saved to be a part of what God is doing.

This leads us to the second question we had to answer at the beginning of this lesson: ***Where are we called to serve the Lord?*** The answer is where you are at. Open your eyes and where you are at is where you are called to serve the Lord. Wherever you are, whatever and whoever is in front of you is where, what and who you are called to serve.

We are so blessed to have the Bible in our possession for it contains all that we need to know about being a servant. Jesus is our greatest example of servant hood (serving unto death). There are so many examples in the Bible that you should take the time to read to be reminded of Jesus' great example of being a servant. (He served his disciples when he washed their feet. he served the hungry when he fed them. he served the sick when he healed them. he served the lonely and outcast when he interacted and loved them. he served all of us by dying on the cross for our sins.) Right now we are going to focus on one specific scripture where we see Jesus as a role model showing us how to serve God. Read Luke 2:41-52.

When Jesus was 12 years old, his family went to Jerusalem as they did every year. But this time when they left, they lost Jesus. He was left behind in Jerusalem. They assumed he was with family or friends while traveling back home (they traveled caravan style). So Joseph and Mary go back to Jerusalem to find Jesus. It takes them three days to find him! Interestingly, they find him in the temple. When they find him and question him, what answer does Jesus give his mother (Luke 2:49)?

Jesus explains to his parents that he must be about his Father's business. Here's the key to this story in Luke 2: After Jesus went back to Nazareth with his earthly parents, he was about his Father's business for the next 18 years **as a carpenter**. For 18 years, after he proclaimed to his earthly parents that he must be about his heavenly Father's business, Jesus worked in a carpenter's shop. For most of those years, he was probably just cleaning up after his earthly father (being a servant). For 18 years, Jesus was about his heavenly Father's business by serving exactly where he was at, serving those in front of him, honoring and respecting his earthly parents and by being a servant in his earthly father's shop – cleaning up sawdust and the like. Jesus was about his Father's business by glorifying God and not self, by serving others and not pursuing his own agenda.

What about us? When can we be about our Father's business? Today, we can be about our Father's business by being a servant to others in any capacity. Whatever it is we are doing in life (a spouse, a parent, child, employee, or employer); we can be about our

Father's business. We can serve the Lord right where we are at by serving those in front of us.

Here is a "serving the Lord right where we are at" application: If you are married today, then you are called to serve the Lord in your marriage by serving your spouse. In Ephesians 5, in Genesis 2 and so many other places all through the Bible, God will instruct you on how to serve him in your marriage. The book, "Sacred Marriage" by Gary Thomas is a great book. If you are married today, you are called to serve the Lord in your marriage. You've got to find out what pleases the Lord and do it in your life and in your marriage.

Let's look briefly at Ephesians 5

Verse 1 sets the stage for how we are to serve in general (which we can specifically apply to our spouse). What are we told to do in Ephesians 5:1?

The first thing we must do to serve others/spouse is to be imitators of Christ (you gotta know him to imitate him). It is our responsibility to live a life of love just as Christ loved us and then we are to give ourselves up to others/spouse in the same way that Christ sacrificed Himself for us!

Look at Ephesians 5:3-5. Another way you can serve your spouse is being sexually pure and morally pure and not greedy. Did you catch verse 4? We can also serve others/spouse with our speech!!! Use your words wisely, especially when talking to your spouse.

Write out Ephesians 5:10.

Let's find out what pleases the Lord (you've gotta read your Bible) and then let's do it in our life and in our marriage. Are you ready to please God? What does Ephesians 5:21 say we are to do?

Submission is a hard thing to do; but it pleases God. We are serving others when we are submitting to each other. What does submitting to others look like? Here's a simple example: You're having lunch with a friend. You want to eat at Chipotle. Your friend wants to eat at Taco Bell. Although you absolutely hate Taco Bell, you submit to your friend's desire and you eat at Taco Bell. That's just one general way to submit to each other. There are thousands of other ways to be submissive to one another.

Write out a few ways you can submit to others/spouse.

That's a hard one, isn't it? We are to submit to each other. This is an act of spiritual worship and a sacrifice that is pleasing to God. This is how God can use you to build what he is building (Godly marriages).

Again, it is our spiritual act of worship, our spiritual sacrifice, our fragrant offering to Jesus, to not only respect, but to honor and love each other. When we are serving the Lord by doing all these things we are instructed to do in Ephesians 5, we are being a living stone, being built into a spiritual house and we are being a holy priesthood doing the good work God prepared in advance for us to do. When we are submitting, loving, honoring and respecting each other, we are the beautiful masterpiece God created us to be. We are living out his poem and he is very well pleased. A strange thing happens in a marriage when you stop expecting your spouse to serve you and instead you serve the Lord by loving your spouse. It will radically transform your marriage.

Same thing is true if we have children. We are called to serve the Lord by serving our children. You can read Deuteronomy 6, Proverbs, Ephesians 5 (to name a few), to see how we are called to serve the Lord with our children. If you are raising your children in the Lord, you are serving the Lord. If you are an employer or employee, you are called to serve the Lord in your work. Right where you are at you are called to serve the Lord. Submitting is hard but the fruit it produces is immeasurable. The next time you struggle with submitting, just remember first and foremost that when you submit (to anyone) you are submitting to the Lord.

Along with serving the Lord in our private life (serving our spouse, children, others, employer), God has also made us a part of the body of Christ in which we are to serve. He has called us to be a part of the body. There is a balance between serving the Lord in our private life and serving the Lord formally in the church (not vocationally for money - but serving the Lord in the body of Christ). There must be a balance and our family has to be our priority but that doesn't change the fact that God has called us to be a part of serving the body as well. He has made us as a part of the body and the body cannot function without each and every one of us.

It's very commonly known that only 15% of the people in a church do all of the work. What that equates to is 15% of the body of Christ is actually functioning in their gifts. Think of your own personal body and how it would be if only 15% of it was functioning.

It wouldn't work so well. Same is true of our churches – they are functioning on 15%. If you are not serving the Lord in your church, please get involved in some sort of service. Most churches always have a great need for servants in the children's ministry and most offer a variety of other areas to serve. Find the place where you can serve the Lord by serving others in your church.

Now let's go to 1 Peter 4:10 in our Bible to receive a package. Do you think this scripture applies to you? _____

You have been given a gift from God. What does 1 Peter 4:10 tell you to do with that gift?

Don't squander away what God has given you. Remember our kick off verse? He created you (gifted you) as his workmanship, his masterpiece, his beautiful poema, to do good works. He has created you with the perfect gift to do his work which he planned for you to do in advance. Be a part of what God is building by using your gift(s) well to serve one another.

There are many parts of the body. All the parts must work together. It's not the job of just one part to do all the work. It's not just the pastor's job to do all the work. (See Ephesians 4:11-13 for the role of the pastor.) The leader/pastor is to equip you so that you can do the work of the ministry. God knows there are not enough hours in the day for one person to do all the work. So he created a body of believers each with a gift to serve each other. Be a functioning part of the body by using your gift!

Go back to 1 Peter 4 and now look verse 11. List the gifts highlighted in this scripture.

If you have the gift of speaking, the scripture tells us that you are to speak as though God were speaking. That's a pretty high calling my gift-speaking friend! If you have the gift of helping others, you are to do it with the all the strength and energy that God supplies. If you speak as though God were speaking and if you serve with the strength and energy God supplies, then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. That's a good use of your gift indeed!

It is our highest calling in our life to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. (We don't have the time to go through all the scriptures that confirm we are to glorify God. Do a word search and in your quiet time delve into the word to find your purpose for glorifying God in your life.) We glorify God by serving him where we are at and by being a part of

the body. By using the gifts God has given us and doing what we do with all the strength and energy that God supplies.

There are so many gifts that God has given the body of Christ. The gifts listed in Romans 12 are called the creation gifts. These are the gifts that God created you with. Read the list of creation gifts in Romans 12 starting at verse 4. Write out the gifts you can identify.

Speaking, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, extending kindness. Use whatever gift you have been given unto the Lord. He has made you for a specific purpose with a specific gift. Serve him well with it. The body of Christ is healthy when it's working 100%. When the body of Christ is working and functioning together, the body is healthy and becomes an unstoppable witness for Christ. The enemy takes us out when only a portion of the body is functioning.

Here are some additional scriptures to study: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:1-16. Study those verses, meditate on them in your quiet time and then ask God if they apply to you. And if it applies, and it does, find out how it can be played out in your life.

We've talked about who is called to serve and where are we called to serve. Now let's answer the last question posed at the beginning: ***How are we called to serve the Lord?***

One of the biggest open doors for the enemy to step through in order to wreak havoc in the church is when people are serving the Lord with the wrong motives. Serving with the wrong motive is a wide open door for the enemy to bring division, destruction and calamity into a church. When we are serving the Lord to serve ourselves, we are in a really bad place.

Someone asked an orchestra conductor what was the hardest instrument to get filled in the orchestra. Without hesitation the conductor said "Second violin." Everybody wants to play first violin, but to find someone who will pour their life into playing second violin is one of the most difficult things for a conductor of an orchestra to do. No one wants to play second fiddle because there is no glory there. There is no acknowledgment. There is no spotlight. When people come to church to serve in order to meet some type of self need – a need for acknowledgment, a need for position, need for prominence, it never works because they came with the wrong motive. When people come to serve in order to meet a self need, it always opens the door for the enemy to create damage within the church.

Our motive to serve the Lord should always be to serve the Lord only and to serve him only. We cannot come to serve the Lord with some kind of need to meet some kind of

emotional or psychological need - to be noticed or acknowledged, or appreciated or receive prominence, or to have a title or a label. When we are serving the Lord for him and him alone and we're pouring our life into him and the service of others, when we don't think (or care) that anyone is looking, then we can be sure our motive is right and that the Lord is using us for his glory. It's all about our heart, girls.

When the question is "How do I serve the Lord?" the answer is with the right heart, with the right attitude, with the right motive.

Let's use Philippians 2 again. Read verses 3-5. (This scripture can be used for every area of our life, including serving the Lord.)

What should our motives **not** be?

If we are not to do anything out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, what should our motive for serving be? _____

In humility! Considering others. In essence God's word is telling us not to be selfish. Not to be focused on self. Self is our enemy. Self is not something to be built up and coddled. Self is not to be esteemed. Let's not try to impress others. To be humble means we are not to be thinking of self. God tells us we are to think of others as better than self. We must have the same attitude that Jesus had about serving others (having the mind of Christ). We must have the mind of Christ who emptied Himself of all of his rights and, although he was God, he set aside his rights as deity and came down from his rightful place to serve us when we were his enemy. We are told in Philippians 2 to have that same mind set. To have the mind of Christ. The only way we can have the mind of Christ is to crucify the self mind. In order to put on the mind of Christ, we have to put off the self mind.

Read Galatians 2:20. What is Paul saying about his old self this scripture?

Now read Ephesians 4:21-24. What does the Word of God tell us about our old self and our new self?

To have the mind of Christ requires a crucifying of self. We must put off our old sinful nature and be renewed by the Spirit and put on our new nature! This is a daily requirement!

When we serve the Lord, no matter where – in our private life or in church, the number one thing we have to do is crucify self and put on the mind of Christ - which is a humble, thinking of others, no concerned for self, attitude. The reason why we must do this is because our feelings are going to get hurt.

We are going to get offended. If we commit to serve the Lord in any area of our life, especially in the church, our feelings are going to get hurt and we are going to get offended and things are not going to go our way. When we get offended or hurt while serving the Lord, there is a way to know if our motive is right and whether we are serving the Lord or are serving self. When we are serving God and things don't go our way or we get offended, if we freak out, if we get all worked up, if we get angry, if we stomp our feet and start saying bad stuff about the church, the elders and the body, and if we take off never to be seen again, that's a clear sign that we are serving self. When we are serving God and we get offended, if we let the offense roll off our back, if we don't even notice we have been offended it is because we are so focused and motivated to serve the Lord by serving others that we are not even thinking of self, then we can be certain that we are serving God with the right motive and not for self.

When a person is serving the Lord with the right heart and motive, you can see the mind of Christ in that person. The two motives (serving self or serving God) can clearly be seen in conflict/offense. But just remember, there will be conflict when we're serving the Lord by serving others and serving in the church. Serving hurts. It's painful. It's difficult. Why? Because we are all sinners. We are sinners serving sinners and we are most likely going to be offended. However, the way you respond to the offense will reveal your true heart and motive. Have the mind of Christ in you while serving and your heart and motive will be true and pure.

Read Acts 20:18-21. How did Paul serve the Lord?

Guys, let's take an example from Paul's years of service and serve the Lord with humility, with tears, enduring trials for the glory of God. Let us not shrink back from speaking the truth in love. And let's always be bold to speak of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and tell others (in love and grace) that they too should repent and turn to God. As we serve like Paul, we will be doing God's will and will be living in harmony and unity with the Spirit and with other believers.

Now, reflect back on the questions posed at the beginning of this lesson and let's check our original answers to the answers we have discovered in this lesson.

- 1) Who is called to serve the Lord? I am. Everyone is called to serve the Lord.
- 2) Where are we called to serve the Lord? Everywhere. Wherever we are and whatever and whoever is in front of us is where we are called to serve the Lord.
- 3) How am I called to serve the Lord? With humility. With the mind of Christ.

How did you do? Purpose yourself from here on out, no matter what your “score” was, to daily serve the Lord well with the gifts he has given, everywhere you are, and to do so in humility and with the mind of Christ.

Here’s a quote from George Mueller (pillar of faith and service to the Lord in the 1800’s) from his own writing, his autobiography:

“Dear reader, does your soul long to be rich towards God, to lay up treasures in heaven? The world passes away and also the lust thereof. Yet a little while and our stewardship will be taken from us. At present we have the opportunity of serving the Lord with our time, our talents, our bodily strength, our gifts, and also with our property; but shortly this opportunity may cease. Oh, how shortly it may cease. Before this is ever read by any one, I may have fallen asleep; and the very next day after you have read this, dear reader, you may fall asleep. Therefore, while we have the opportunity, let us serve the Lord.”

Listen, while we have the opportunity, let us serve the Lord; don’t squander the opportunity to serve. It’s the greatest and most rewarding adventure in this part of eternity.

Let’s pray.

Lord, I ask that you take my pride and replace it with your humility. Jesus renew my mind and give me the right motive to serve you. Allow me to crucify myself so that I may serve you with the same attitude that you served me. Thank you for being my supreme example of servant hood. Enable me to be just like you. I thank you Lord for every gift you have given me. Help me to use it wisely and to your good, for your glory. In your name I serve. Amen.