

# Serving Others

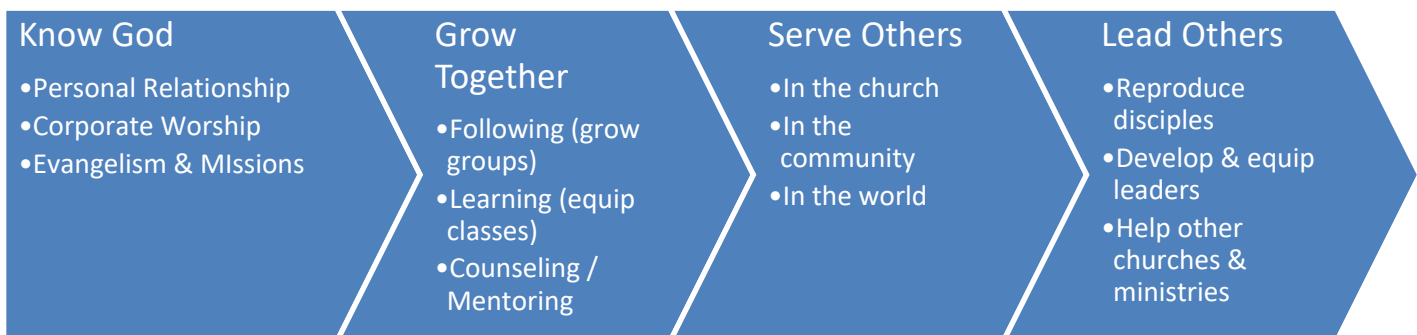
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Good morning! Please open your Bibles to Matthew 25

## Review

For the last couple weeks, and Lord willing, one more after today, we've been talking through our church's mission. Normally, we walk through passages of Scripture on Sunday morning, but we're taking some time to remind ourselves of what we should be all about as a local church. So here's one way to picture this:

## Make Disciples



We're talking about serving others today, and I want to do what I've done the past two weeks, so we'll look first at the Bible and then think about how we apply this part of our mission at Cornerstone. And I want to read several texts to us today with the hope that you and I will be reminded about just how pervasive the theme of serving others really is. The reason for that is that I think making disciples by helping people know God – that makes sense. Of course, people must know God if they are to be His disciples. And then yes, of course, we should help people grow in their walk with Jesus – knowing more about Him and walking more and more in line with what He taught.

But serving? Yes, I can see that it's a good thing – but should my life really be characterized by serving? Is that what I'm supposed to be doing with my time and energy and money and resources?

And the answer, I believe, is yes. Serving others, meeting needs, caring for one another, loving others – those are all different ways of talking about it, and they're all critical

elements of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. If we're going to know Him and follow Him, the path is one of serving others.

The language the Old Testament often uses is one of obedience and walking in the fear of the Lord as we love our neighbor. In the gospels, Jesus speaks of His followers as disciples, that is, those who should walk in the way of love and service that He walked. The word that the apostle Paul often uses in the NT is that of 'slave' or 'bond-servant.' That's what we are as Christians. We are slaves of Christ, called to a life of service.

Serving others is a critical part of our task to make disciples who truly know God. In fact, as we'll read, Jesus says that our lack of service toward others reveals our true attitude toward Jesus himself. So I'm going to read seven different passages or verses here, so that we can take this in and be reminded of the importance of this theme:

Jesus says...

**Matthew 23:11-12**

The greatest among you shall be your servant. **12** Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Paul speaking to the elders of the church in Ephesus..

**Acts 20:35**

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

**Galatians 5:13-14**

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Paul talking about sharing the gospel...

**1 Corinthians 9:19**

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

The apostle John writes...

**1 John 3:18**

Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

The apostle Peter also says...

**1 Peter 4:7-11**

**7** The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. **8** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. **9** Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. **10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: **11** whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amen

And finally, let's return to the words of Jesus...

**Matthew 25:31-46**

**31** "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **32** Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. **34** Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. **35** For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, **36** I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' **37** Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? **38** And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? **39** And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' **40** And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

**41** "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. **42** For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, **43** I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' **44** Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty

or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ **45** Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ **46** And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Let’s pray...

## Intro

There are many things in life that are counter-intuitive. You would think they would be one way, but really they work just the opposite. Things like sharp knives are safer than dull ones. Doesn’t seem logical but it’s true. Or don’t pour water on a grease fire. You might want to do that, but don’t, it’ll only make it worse.

Well, as I was thinking about things that fit this category, I was reminded about a song that you may have heard before by Jimmy Soul from 1963. I’m going to mention it now, not because I think it’s true at all. And I cleared this with my wife beforehand, just so you know. I mention it because he’s making a claim that is counterintuitive. It goes against our assumptions.



So you can sing along if you know it...Jimmy Soul

“If you want to be happy for the rest of your life, never make a pretty woman your wife...So for my personal point of view, get an ugly girl to marry you...”

His point (and he’s wrong!) is that if you get a pretty girl to marry you, you’ll only experience heartache. So don’t marry a pretty girl and you’ll be happy for the rest of your life.

His point, and again – he’s wrong, is counterintuitive. He’s saying the way you want to go, won’t lead you where you want to be. But he is right that many things in life don’t work the way that we might initially expect.

One of the reasons for that, I believe, is because God created the world to be surprising. And to follow His design for us, how we will most flourish and find joy and peace and contentment and all the things that we desire – God’s way is far better than what seems most natural to us.

For example, our natural tendency, because of our selfish, proud natures, is to prioritize our own happiness over everything else. If I really want to be happy, then I need to look out for myself. I need to do the things that will bring me comfort and pleasure and power and influence and security. I need to put me first, and then, if I'm able I can try to help the people that I most love be happy as well.

If I come home tired, I want others to serve me, not to keep serving! If I feel important, then I don't want to be treated like a servant. But God's kingdom is unexpected and counterintuitive. It doesn't work the way that we might anticipate.

As the passages that we read earlier show us (and there are many more), the way that God has designed the world and the way that our lives are meant to be lived may seem counterintuitive.

If you want to be happy for the rest of your life – here's what you should really do. You should give yourself to loving God and loving others. A life of service to King Jesus is the best road to true and everlasting happiness.

Jesus says, the humble will be exalted. Whoever desires greatness should be the servant of all. Pastors and theologians sometimes refer to this as the unexpected, upside-down way of the kingdom of God. The pattern of God's kingdom is counterintuitive; it's not what we'd expect. So in God's kingdom, enemies are not for conquering but for loving.

The way to freedom is through slavery  
The way inside is to go outside  
The way to power is through weakness  
The way to gain your life is by losing it  
The way to riches is by giving  
The way to be exalted is humility  
The way to greatness is to serve

And Jesus Himself shows us what it means to serve others. He came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. Jesus gave up the throne of heaven to come to earth. He took on human form – had a body just like you and me. And he served others with His life. Even more, He served others with His death. Jesus laid down

His life, making the ultimate sacrifice, in order to redeem a people for Himself. He died on a Cross, though He didn't deserve it, so that we might not get the punishment for our sins that we deserve. But He didn't stay dead, because the way up is down in God's kingdom. Jesus has now been exalted to the right hand of the Father and invites sinners like you and me to know Him and have eternal life through faith in Him. And if you aren't trusting in Jesus alone for eternal life, He calls you to turn from your sin and place your faith in Him today.

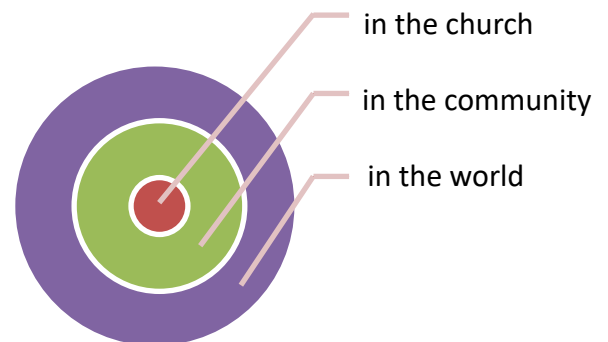
As Christians, we trust that Jesus laid down His life, and He calls us to follow Him. The way of the kingdom of God is unexpected and upside-down and counterintuitive.

But that's our call. Jesus commands that we follow Him and lay down our lives in service. That's the way to greatness. That's the way to true, everlasting joy. That's the way of King Jesus and the way of His kingdom. That's why we serve others.

## How do we serve at Cornerstone?

As we said a moment ago, our service for others is a part of our larger mission to make disciples. We want to genuinely love and care for others, but we also want to see them experience the joy of knowing God and growing in Him.

So how do we do that as a church? How do we seek to live out this part of our mission? We seek to serve others in a few areas. You can think of them as a series of concentric circles... (show picture)



## In the Church

In our church, we serve others as we serve each other, both on Sundays and through the week.

One of the primary ways that we do that is through meeting needs for one another that we each have in our own lives from time to time. So if someone is in the hospital or just had a baby, their grow group might provide meals or childcare or just a listening ear. We try to help serve people who are walking through grief or financial struggles or broken

relationships. There are all kinds of needs that we have and all kinds of ways that those needs are met by others in our church family.

Many of you have significant kingdom ministry that isn't public or flashy or that we as pastors or the church are even aware of, but you don't serve for the recognition or praise of people.

And you know, sometimes that means your life gets interrupted. It's not convenient. It's sometimes awkward or uncomfortable to serve others.

But I heard someone say this week, as I was in a meeting at Bravely, the pro-life center here in town, that I will tell you about in a moment – we grow when we're inconvenienced. Do you believe that? We grow when we're inconvenienced. It feels counterintuitive.

It is often at those times when we don't feel like helping, when we don't feel like we have the energy, when we don't feel as though we have the finances – it is often at those times, when God challenges to really evaluate our hearts and our circumstances to see if we aren't really just wanting our lives to be easier, more comfortable, more in line with our own agenda and goals. Maybe the Spirit is allowing people or events to come into your life so that you might have an opportunity to grow through serving.

And the Spirit of God not only calls us to serve, but the Spirit also enables our service. The NT teaches that when we trust in Christ and join God's family as sons and daughters, that we are given gifts in order to help build up the family.

Let me read again from 1 Peter 4...

**1 Peter 4:10-11**

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: **11** whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

So notice that each has received a gift. That is, everyone who is in Christ is the recipient of giftings from the Spirit of God. You have spiritual gifts. You have supernatural enablement to serve others.

Peter mentions a couple of the gifts here – speaking and serving. There are several other passages that speak to other gifts of the Spirit: prophecy, teaching, exhortation, administration, generosity, cheerfulness, faith – as well as some which I believe were for building the foundation of the church during the time of the apostles like tongues and healing. And different passages talk about different gifts – the lists aren't the same.

Which leads me to believe that these spiritual gift lists aren't exhaustive. That is, they are not meant to describe every way that the Spirit of God provides gifts to believers. Rather, they are exemplary – they give examples of the kinds of gifts that Christians may have.

Which means, that it's not like you have a particular gift and no others. Or that you need to fill out a spiritual gift test to determine what house you belong to, I mean, what spiritual gift you have. Instead, I think we ought to think about spiritual gifts as those skills and abilities and opportunities that we each have which the Spirit grants to us by His grace, so that we would use them to love and serve one another.

Maybe you have a desire to teach the Word of God, so you might use that desire to work with children and learn how to teach the Bible with clarity and simplicity. Maybe you are handy with car repair, and you notice that a sister in the church needs work on her vehicle, so you volunteer to help. Maybe you have administrative gifts, so you volunteer to help run meetings or make preparations for church events. Or maybe, you have time in this season of your life, and you can visit with some folks who need a friend or need prayer. There are tons of ways that the Spirit might bring skills or opportunities or needs across your path, so that you would step in and build up the church.

So how do you know what spiritual gift you have? Start serving! Try things out!

You know, the emphasis of the NT isn't so much on figuring out exactly which gift you have, it's on using our gifts to love and serve each other. That's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians and it's what Peter says in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter...



### **1 Peter 4:10**

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace

Everyone has a gift, so don't let it go to waste! Steward it well! So if you don't know or have a guess as to the particular ways that the Spirit has gifted you, here's my advice: start serving! Work at getting to know others, listen for opportunities to meet needs or to use your time and talents to help someone else.

So in our church, we serve others by meeting needs, by using our spiritual gifts, and by volunteering in more formal ways. There are many ways that we serve each other each week. There are people in the tech booth who run the sound board and work the slideshow, people who welcome you to the building, people who use musical talents to help us worship, people who do work projects around the building. Our trustee board has an inside team and an outside team, and they help organize whatever work needs to be done to help us do ministry more effectively.

Of course, there are people who serve in our nursery, kids ministry, and with our students. People teach lessons from God's Word, people help watch babies, people hang out with teenagers to show them the love of Christ.

And all of these things are really aimed at helping our church with its mission to make disciples. We really aren't interested in just having childcare on Sunday mornings – we want to see these kids know God for themselves. That's the motivation behind all that we do – from weeding flower beds to playing an instruments – we want to see more people know God and follow Him.

Our church is also blessed to have paid staff who help us with our mission. Of course, we have our staff pastors, but there's also Emily DeVon, our children's director who teaches and loves on our kids in so many ways. Tammy Sollars has been our church's administrative assistant for years now, and serves you in ways that only God knows. Just recently, we are working through a transition from Cathy Harden as financial secretary to Patsy Lewandowski. Cathy has done a fabulous job for several years now overseeing our financial records, and as she hands things off to Patsy, I'm sure Patsy will

do the same. If you see Cathy, say thanks. It's a joy to work at Cornerstone, and I'm thankful to God for the opportunity to work alongside the people here.

So we serve each other in the church...

### **In the Community**

In the next layer of our circle of service, we seek to serve others in our community. We want to help you serve others in your neighborhood where you live. We want to serve Lafayette and central Indiana. The upside-down way of the kingdom means that we don't only serve those who can give us something in return. We love everybody. Everyone is our neighbor.

One of the ways that we do this and that you should do this is through your job. Your workplace is an opportunity for you to love and serve others. Do you view it that way? I know that's not always easy. But Jesus says that we are to work hard as though we're really working for Him, not just our boss here on earth.

Remember, the way of the kingdom of God is not to push and shove and claw your way to the top – it's to become the servant of all. So how are you doing at serving others at your job?

We also want to serve our immediate neighbors. The Edgelea neighborhood and school (Teal to Beck, 9<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>) – that's our target. We want to love these people particularly well. We want to have a relationship with the local schools like Edgelea Elementary. We want them to know that we love them and want to serve however we can. Again, all for our mission of making disciples.

We also serve others through ministry partners. I am so thankful for like-minded men and women who give themselves to serving those in need. I think of Trinity mission and Through the Gate ministries who help men and women battle addiction and difficult life struggles with compassion and the love of Christ.

We love the work of Bravely (which used to be called Matrix) – the local pro-life organization who are on the front lines in helping women recognize God's love for them and their unborn children. There are opportunities to volunteer with them as an advocate or mentor, and there will be more opportunities in the future to meet specific

needs that these families have. I went to a meeting this past week that had to do with helping connect churches with these mothers and families who are in our neighborhoods and need help with basic items like beds, mattresses, household items, diapers, and other things. We want to be involved in serving others in this way.

We love the work of Habitat for Humanity as they seek to restore houses and neighborhoods. Several folks from our church and even grow groups volunteer at Lafayette Urban Ministry or LUM to help those facing poverty and homelessness.

There are many opportunities for us to step up and sacrifice our time and energy and money to serve others. And I recognize that most of you, if not all of you, are involved in serving others in some way. Praise God for that, but maybe God is pressing you to look for some other way to get involved in serving others in our community. Maybe it's one of the ways that I've just mentioned, or it may be something else. Friend, whatever it is, I want to challenge you – step in and serve. That's what the way of the kingdom is all about.

### **Among the Nations**

So we serve each other in our church, we serve our community, and finally, we serve the nations or we serve the world. We believe that God has called each one of us to be involved in one way or another in work of missions. The question isn't whether or not we're called, it's how we are going to be involved – are we going to send or are we going to go ourselves?

So if God calls us to serve the nations around the world, how do we do that?

In the interest of time, I'm going to just run quickly through some of this, but we would love to talk more with you about how we try to get everyone involved in the work of missions here at Cornerstone.

There are three main ways that we're involved in missions work...

#### **1) Evangelism & Church Planting**

For evangelism and church planning, we are trying to do our part to get the gospel message of Jesus to people who have never heard the good news. There are whole groups of people who do not have access to the Bible and have never heard the name of Jesus. We want to help see people come to Christ and see churches planted among the

unreached peoples. Daniel Whitenack, one of our deacons, is involved in multiple things, including Bible translation among unreached peoples.

We also partner with the Southern Baptist Convention as they seek to plant churches all over the world. More locally, we support Plant Indy – a group that seeks to help see healthy churches started in the central Indiana area

We also support Dennis and Julie Runner, who are members here, as they minister to international students on Purdue's campus and in their home.

## 2) Church Strengthening

We also want to see church's strengthened and become healthier. Internationally, the Tully's work to strengthen churches in Moldova, including the one Nat Tully pastors. Pastor Mike is involved with Small Church USA, a group that supports pastors and churches to become healthier. David Selvey helps other churches in the area of missions, alongside his work to serve as the director of HAFF, the Haitian American Friendship Foundation. We also support the Crossroads Fellowship, made up of other Baptist churches in Indiana to help other pastors and churches be all that Jesus intends them to be.

So we want to see people won to Christ, churches planted & strengthened, and then third, we want to serve the nations by...

## 3) Meeting Needs

Whitney Ashworth helps to run an orphanage in Bolivia, and is doing a great job at serving these kids who are in crisis. The Gangwers serve in central Detroit, helping to meet needs in that community. And we could go on and on about the ways God has allowed us to help serve others in the world.

There is so much more that we would want to say about missions, but the question in front of us today is how are we called to serve others globally?

Maybe that's through prayer and financial support. If you want to support a particular missionary – you can do that by designating your gift by name. If you want to support the Runners or Whitney, just put their name on the check or label it online. Or you can give to our missionary fund that we use to support these and other missionaries.

Or maybe you are interested in exploring if missions may be something God is calling you to. If that's the case, we'd love to talk with you about that. Find one of the pastors or Nathan Childress or David Selvey, and we'd love to have that conversation.

All of us are called by God to serve others and get the gospel to the nations. And we trust that God is faithful and will reward what is done in service to Him.

As we come to a close, let me offer three statements about serving from me regarding serving as Cornerstone in the years to come...

### **1. Serving should be the expectation for all followers of Christ**

The assumption for Christians is that we would all be following the way of our master, King Jesus. He served, so we must serve as well. But in the way of the upside-down kingdom, that is the way to true greatness.

We should serve one another in our families, in our grow groups, in our church, in our jobs, in our community, in the world...the expectation that Christ has for me is that I would serve others.

### **2. Cornerstone must serve our neighbors, or we risk losing our mission**

Churches that become only focused on themselves eventually find themselves losing sight of the mission and dying. We must serve our community – not because of what they can do for us or because we want recognition or the praise of men – but because we want them to see our good works and glorify the Father in heaven. For Cornerstone to remain healthy, we must continually seek to love and serve others.

### **3. Churches need to cooperate and not compete with other churches**

God's kingdom is bigger than Cornerstone Baptist Church. We want to cooperate with other churches who are preaching the true gospel. One day, when Christ returns for His people, and all the Christians around the world will meet Him in the air – on that day, Christ will have one bride, a people from every tribe, nation, and tongue. We won't be competing against one another on that day, and so it seems silly to do that now.

We want the true gospel to go forth all over the world. We want people to be growing in their walk with God in churches who are seeking to follow His Word. And we want to serve people as Jesus taught us alongside brothers and sisters around the world.

I know I've mentioned quite a few things today, and I hope it doesn't feel too much like a business meeting. But let me challenge you to consider perhaps one area where God may be calling you to step up in your service of others. You might say, I'm too busy. That may be true, so let me ask you to consider if you're too busy with the right things. Are you loving and serving others with your time or trying to get ahead with your own agenda and priorities? Maybe God is calling you to make a change today.

Maybe it's getting involved in missions or local outreach through giving or volunteering. Maybe it's working to discern your spiritual gift or leaning in to try something new. Maybe God wants you to step up at home and serve your spouse or your kids or other people in your life.

At the end of the day, we can ask ourselves, how can we serve? Who can do this? How can we love and serve other people this way?

### **1 John 4:19**

We love because he first loved us.

You see, it's not just that Christ set a good example for us to follow. He actually loved us when we were His enemies. He served us, not because he needed us, but because He loves us. And so now, because Christ has loved us and gave himself up for us, we can and must love and serve others.

Let's pray...

### **Survey**

You can fill it out via the online code or use a paper copy

It can be anonymous, if you'd like us to know your name you can do that

## **Grow Group Questions**

1. How did Jesus model serving others?
2. Are there ways that we wrongly make serving only about ourselves?
3. What is it about serving others that you find hard to do? What are some things that have prevented you from serving others in the past?
4. Do you know what your spiritual gift(s) is? What are some ways that you have tried to use it? If you don't know, what could be some ways that you could seek to serve?
5. What opportunities do you have to serve at your workplace or neighborhood? What are some ways that you could plan to serve others in the weeks ahead?
6. Were you aware of Cornerstone's involvement in the various kinds of missions work (evangelism & church planting, church strengthening, meeting needs)? Are there any ways that God may want you to consider getting involved yourself?
7. How could Cornerstone become better at helping people serve others?