

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a paved road that curves through a hilly, arid landscape. The road is light-colored and leads towards a distant, hazy horizon. The hills are covered in sparse, dry vegetation. The overall color palette is a range of browns and tans, creating a sense of a long, winding journey.

firstmbchurch

my **PATH**

A discipleship plan for developing
fully devoted followers of Christ.

Group Study Guide

3 VALUES | 1 MISSION | 6 PRIORITIES

LESSON 5

SERVE SOMEWHERE

... because we have gifts designed to help others.



ONE MORE TIME.

We have three values, one mission, and six priorities.

Our mission: First MB Church exists to help people find and follow Jesus.

Our values: We aim to be real people, with a real faith, making a real impact.

Our priorities: To fulfill our mission and values, we believe we should:

- 1) Connect with a few, 2) Spend time with God, 3) Live a life of worship,
- 4) Engage in missions, 5) Serve somewhere, and 6) Share somehow.

It should not come as a big surprise that society in general is becoming increasingly more self-centered. The nice way of saying this is to describe it as becoming more individualistic.

The rise of individualism and affluence tend to coincide. As you become more independent financially, it tends to impact how much you want to get involved in the lives of those around you.

So what is the big deal? What difference does it make if society becomes more self-centered? To a non-believer this is probably not a big deal. Christians, however, are not called to live self-centered lives. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 16:24: "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." Taking up a cross is not a self-centered activity. It means to set aside your needs and wants for the benefit of someone else.

You are not called to deny yourself just for the sake of denying yourself. Ephesians 2:10 reads:

“For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.”

This means that every living, breathing person on this planet has a purpose. Their purpose is not to arrange everything in their lives so the entire cosmos circles around them. If the only vision for your life is to take care of yourself then that is a very lonely path to walk down. It is too easy to get completely wrapped up on your own needs and never even look at the needs of those around you.

Eternity.

Keep in mind you are the one and only version of you God created. There are not 1 million versions of you on this planet. You were created for a purpose for this life and for eternity. You were not created just for this life alone. You were created for eternity.

Having an eternal perspective helps bring focus and meaning to this life. God made you for a purpose and bought you with a huge price. **Your ultimate purpose is to bring glory to God.** One way this is done is by living a selfless life. Practice now for your eternity of selfless living in heaven. Now is the time to look for the connection where your life intersects the lives of those around you.

What is the meaning of your life? Why did God create you? Is life defined by your definition of success? Is meaning found in getting a job, house, car, 2 1/2 kids and a white picket fence?

The very essence of becoming a follower of Jesus is to deny yourself. **This doesn't mean to think of yourself as less, but to think of yourself less.** The whole world does not center on your needs. You were created to be the hands and feet of Jesus here on earth. Your actions now have an eternal impact. Fulfillment and meaning can be found in serving others.

Society spreads the lie that serving others and finding fulfillment for yourself go down two different paths. If you serve others like you were serving Jesus you WILL find meaning and

purpose. The paths of fulfillment and service are actually one and the same.

Three Servants.

Jesus told a parable in Matthew 25:14-30 about three different servants. This parable emphasized the importance of the perspective you have in this life. Is your perspective self-centered living for the now or is it selfless living for eternity?

Matthew 25:14 reads:

“For it is just like a man going on a journey. He called his own slaves and turned over his possessions to them.”

Jesus was answering a question asked by his disciples back in Matthew 24:3 about when the end of the world would come. In answering this question, He tells a parable about a man (God) going on a journey and turning over all His possessions to His servants (believers).

The very first point Jesus makes in the parable is that **everything you have belongs to Him**. There is nothing you have from the shoes on your feet to the breath in your lungs that did not come from God. When it comes to serving and seeing the needs of others, the first step is to realize everything belongs to God. You are being asked to live a selfless life with everything God has given you.

Matthew 25:15 reads:

“To one he gave five talents; to another, two; and to another, one—to each according to his own ability. Then he went on a journey.”

This is where it is easy to cry about life not being fair. Each

Why Serve?

1. We serve out of **obedience**.
2. We serve out of **gratitude**.
3. We serve with our **giftedness**.

servant was given a different amount. The word “talent” meant a measure of money. But in this parable Jesus was not just talking about money. The master had entrusted these servants with His entire estate. Our English word *talent* comes from the Greek word in this parable, but the meaning goes much deeper.

Our English word *talent* encompasses different gifts and abilities. This is even a limited view when reading this parable. **Your entire being is a talent from God.** The country you were born in, education, ability to interact with people, health, etc... think about all the graces God has given you in your life that you did not earn.

No Excuses.

Sometimes we limit talent to just special abilities people have like leading worship on a Sunday morning. The excuse becomes that if you just had a special talent, *then* you would serve. In this parable no servant was left without. Each servant was given a gift by the master before He left. It doesn't matter if God has given you 5, 2, or 1; we have all been given something.

Matthew 25:16-18 reads:

“Immediately the man who had received five talents went, put them to work, and earned five more. In the same way the man with two earned two more. But the man who had received one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.”

The first two servants immediately went to work with what the master had given them. Sometimes believers get caught up in good intentions and never actually get to work. Have you ever thought about serving somewhere or someone, but never actually get around to doing it? These servants took what was given to them and put it to work. They didn't just sit around with good feelings. **Denying yourself and living a selfless life means getting up and getting to work.**

Matthew 25:19-30 reads:

“After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five talents approached, presented five more talents, and said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. Look, I’ve earned five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master’s joy!’

Then the man with two talents also approached. He said, ‘Master, you gave me two talents. Look, I’ve earned two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master’s joy!’

Then the man who had received one talent also approached and said, ‘Master, I know you. You’re a difficult man, reaping where you haven’t sown and gathering where you haven’t scattered seed. So I was afraid and went off and hid your talent in the ground. Look, you have what is yours.’

But his master replied to him, ‘You evil, lazy slave! If you knew that I reap where I haven’t sown and gather where I haven’t scattered, then you should have deposited my money with the bankers. And when I returned I would have received my money back with interest.’

So he took the talent from him and give it to the one who has 10 talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have more than enough. But from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. And throw this good-for-nothing slave into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The master will return and accounts will be settled. One day everyone will have to answer for how they lived their life. The first two servants doubled the master’s possessions. They entered into JOY as a result of what they had done. They found fulfillment and

looked forward to the master's return. They didn't compare themselves to one another.

The two talent slave didn't wonder why he didn't have five. The five talent slave didn't brag about having so much. **They both did the best they could with what was given to them.** For them the day of the master's return was an amazing day. They started out by telling the master what they had done with the talents they were given.

This is an important perspective. They realized all they had was given to them. They didn't start by bragging about what they had done, but by acknowledging that the master had given them everything.

What About You?

What are you doing with what God has given you? Your time, abilities, or opportunities to show God's love will all be settled one day.

The third servant went off and dug a hole and buried the master's possessions. What is odd about this parable is the third servant is called lazy. This servant wasn't lazy at all. In fact, the third servant might have actually worked harder than the first two servants. This servant had to go bury an enormous treasure. A talent was comparable to 20 year's wages. Imagine how large of a hole this servant had to dig to bury 20 years' worth of wages.

By the time everything was buried the master returned and the servant had to go dig it back up. This third servant did a lot of work, but it wasn't for the master. **It was done out of fear.** This servant knew about the master, but didn't really know the master. **How many of us know about God, but we don't really know God's heart?** Had this servant known the master just a little, he would have done something with the talent. God's heart is for you to live a selfless life--to take what He has given you and to use it for His glory.

How are you living a selfless life? How are you taking everything God has given you and using it for His glory? Are you

finding a way to serve and use every idea, ability, and gift God has given you?

Your identity in Christ will be reflected in your activities. You are not saved by works, but your works will reflect God's grace in your life. Too many times people think their activities will change their identity in Christ. Your identity changes your activities.

Find a way to serve. It can be helping your neighbor mow their yard. Rocking babies on a Sunday morning. Helping someone at your work that is having a difficult time.

S.H.A.P.E.

S.H.A.P.E. is a tool to help us discover how God made us and is an acronym for:

S - Spiritual Gifts. Special abilities God has given you to love and serve others. (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)

H - Heart. Special God-given passions that inspire you. (Colossians 3:23-24)

A - Abilities. Natural God-given talents and skills. (Romans 12:6)

P - Personality. How God wired you to respond in life and relate to others. (Psalm 139:14-16)

E - Experiences. Your life experience (both positive and painful) that God intends to use for good. (Romans 8:28-29)



Take the SHAPE test for free at firstmbchurch.org/shape.

You have been given a talent. What are you doing with it? One day you will be held accountable.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you believe God has called us to serve?
2. Discuss how finding fulfillment in life and serving somewhere or someone coincide.
3. Each servant in the parable was given a different amount. Do you believe this is fair? Why or why not?
4. In what ways does comparing ourselves to others stop us from serving altogether?
5. Read Matthew 25:26. The third servant is called evil and lazy. In what ways is it evil and lazy to not use your gifts and abilities to serve God?
6. What are some obstacles that keep people from serving? Discuss some ways to overcome these obstacles.
7. Go to firstmbchurch.org/shape and take the SHAPE test. Make a plan within the next several weeks to use your SHAPE results to serve.
8. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. In what ways does the church as a whole benefit when everyone serves and gets involved?



 firstmbchurch

real people | real faith | real impact
8000 W. 21st St. | Wichita, KS 67205
(316) 722-5885 | firstmbchurch.org