

Gold, Silver & Bronze

Serving

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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So my first job that I had outside of the house was working at McDonald's. Now, I read as I was doing some studying this week that actually they say, statistics say that one out of every eight Americans has at least at one point in their life worked at McDonald's. So I wanted to test that stat and have you raise your hand if you worked at McDonald's at some point in your life. Okay. Not one out of eight, but that's a lot closer. Okay. What about a fast food restaurant? If you worked at a fast food restaurant okay, that's probably more accurate.

In first service, there was like two people that had worked at McDonald's. So I'm glad I have fellow McDonald's employees here today, all right? One of the most important things that I learned at that first job at McDonald's was the importance of customer service. Customer service. I learned that you were supposed to serve others how you wanted to be served. We used phrases at McDonald's like, "The customer is always right." And we meant it.

At McDonald's, I remember being taught by the manager, "It is okay to lose money on a customer if you have to remake their order because something was done wrong," because it means that they will come back in the future and they will probably tell others about their good experience. And so if you take care of them, it's okay to lose money in that moment because we will make it up later. We were asked as employees to treat the store like it was our store. If the store won, it meant that we won.

If the store looked good, it meant that we looked good. And so growing up in that environment, we cared what the customers thought about our store, and we had all decided we want to provide a decent meal at a good price and do it on time. It didn't matter that I was only making \$5.25 an hour. We took pride in what we did. What mattered was that I was representing myself well, my family well, and that I was learning a good work ethic as my father would pound that in my head over and over again to have a good work ethic.

I have discovered that learning the skill to serve will pay big rewards in the working world. Now, at the risk of sounding like those older people that I said that I would never be, I am not sure that most of the next generation has any idea what good customer service is. When I go into most fast-food restaurants today, I often wonder why I went. I feel like I am a burden to the person that's working there.

I leave wondering why I just paid to be treated like I was or to get the quality of food that I received. I'm going to stop there because I'm starting to sound like my parents when I was a teenager, so I'm just going to be done, all right? We need to move on because this morning, I don't want to talk about good customer service. I want to talk about the importance of serving. And I'm not talking about learning to serve well for our own benefit or for our own glory. I want to talk about serving others in the name of Jesus.

Serving, I believe, is one of the ways that God helps us take our next step toward Him. Stephen Covey said, "What you do has far greater impact than what you say. What you do has far greater impact than what you

say. When we serve others, we are being Jesus to them. When we serve others, God uses that as an opportunity to transform us to become more like Him.

For Jesus said, "I did not come to be served, but I came to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many." You see, if we were created in the image of God, which is what Scripture teaches about us as human beings, we are created imago dei in the image of God, then that means we also exist to serve because Jesus served.

You see, something special happens in our hearts and in our lives when we follow in the footsteps of the model that Jesus left for us. It actually becomes a gift to us when we serve others. God uses it to transform our lives. There's a sense of fulfillment that I believe you don't get in any other area of your life than when you are serving because you are doing what God created you to do.

You're fit for it, and you feel that sense of purpose, that sense of belonging. Now, I know some of you are already making excuses. You're saying, "Pastor, I've been raised in the church. I've already heard this message before. I know that you want us to serve, but I just need you to know I'm too busy. I don't know what to do. I don't have any skills that are going to benefit anybody else. They don't need me." I hear people say, "I'm too young, I'm too old." And I remember that when I was taking over this position of lead pastor at the church and I was in my early 30s, I would often meet with people and they would say, "Hey, how are you feeling?

What's going on?" And my response was often, "I feel I'm just too young. I'm too young to do this." And I remember I was meeting with another lead pastor from another church, and he was in his late 50s, and I gave him that comment, and he said, "That's funny, Joel. I feel like I'm too old." So what is that perfect age where you finally feel like you can accomplish what God wants you to accomplish? Do you have like a one or two-year window in your mid-40s or 50s? Those are all excuses, and we all make them. And it's not the first time that God has heard excuses.

All through Scripture, men and women used excuses when God called them to do great things. Joseph was in jail. Moses wasn't a good public speaker. David was too young. Matthew was a tax collector that was despised by the Israelites. Paul murdered Christians. You see, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, He has gifted you with a specific set of skills and a personality that is perfect for what God wants you to do.

Think about that. Your personality, who you are, where God has placed you, the family you were raised in, you have a perfect personality and set of skills to do what God has called only you to do. We're going to pray, and then we're going to jump in a little deeper. Heavenly Father, we come before You. And I know one of the things that we struggle with as humans is being selfish. We believe that the world revolves around us.

And so we often ask questions, "What can we do to better ourselves? What can we do to improve our standard of living? What can we do to gain joy and happiness?" And it's not often that we think of others. And so I pray that You would pour Your Spirit in us, that our eyes would be open to a different perspective, that maybe, just maybe, we were put here to serve somebody else so that you would receive praise.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, I know often when a pastor gets up front and begins talking about serving, that the end goal is that you are going to find a way to serve within the church. But I want you to know that's not the focus of my message today. My focus is not to get you to serve in the church. That's not where I want to spend my time. I don't want to spend my time talking about even getting you to do community service or volunteering in your children's classroom.

I don't want to spend time talking about going on a mission trip, though all of those things are great things, and we should be doing those things. I want to talk about the deeper reason of serving, why we serve because God is way more concerned with why you serve than in what you are doing. God is more concerned about your heart than about the task that is being accomplished. I want to talk about serving as an act of worship to God.

That when we serve, it's not about us. It's not even about the other people necessarily, but it's about worshiping our heavenly Father, serving in the name of Jesus, being the hands and feet of Jesus, serving others because of what God has done for us. Serving others because as we will read, it means that in doing so, sometimes we are actually serving Jesus.

I like to think about this logically just for a minute before we go on because as I think about serving, sometimes we can get in our head that God needs us. God needs me to serve you know because I'm created in such a way that God needs me. And then I'm reminded, "Wait a second. God created everything. God doesn't need me. God takes care of the sparrow," Scripture says. "He makes sure that the sparrow has food to eat, and he's the one that causes the beautiful flowers to grow which are here today and tomorrow are thrown into the fire." God doesn't need me to serve others because He can't do it Himself.

God allows me to serve others so that I can become more like Him. He doesn't need me. It's for our growth. It's for our development. It's for the benefit and the blessing of those around us. Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 4:10 that each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do it as the one who speaks the very words of God.

If anyone serves, they should do it with the strength that God has provided so that in all things, God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. Peter looks at us and he says, "Listen, the gifts that you have been given by God, the gifts that you have received, even the gift of speaking, the gift of walking, of having muscles, and being able to do things in this world is so that you can serve others, number one, and number two, so that it will bring praise and glory to God.

Serving is not about us. It's all about Him." It's all about Him. Let's look at some practical reasons why we should serve. Number one, serving helps us experience the peace that comes from obedience. When we serve, we are being obedient to what God has called and asked us to do. And when God commands us to do something and we do it, we have a greater sense of purpose in our life more so than anything else we would ever do.

Again, Scripture says, "It's why we were given the gifts and the skills and the abilities that we have. There is joy in fulfilling what God has created you to do. It gives us that peace that surpasses understanding. Number two, serving helps us become more like Jesus. You see, in our sinful nature, every single one of us struggles with selfishness. We do believe for whatever reason that life is all about us.

And when we take time to serve others, God gives us a new perspective. Our focus is shifted to Jesus and making sure that our Father receives glory, and we begin to actually see Jesus in other people. Matthew 25:40, the king will reply, "Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." You see, when we are serving others, we are actually serving Jesus.

It's what He has called us to do. And so serving helps us to become more like Him. Number three, serving connects us with other like-minded people. Hebrews 10:24 and 25 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day approaching.

When we serve with others, we make a connection with them that often can't be developed in any other way. These other believers begin to encourage us and motivate us and we find others that we can go through life with. A bond or a connection is made and happens that allows us to experience our unity with God. We can hold each other accountable. We can get to know others that are like us.

I've been on many mission trips throughout the years, and I can tell you that when you go on a mission trip with a group of people, there is a bond or connection that happens while you serve that I've never experienced any other way. You have memories. You have experiences where God did certain things that you

kind of always go back to and you say, "Hey, remember when we were there and God did that?" It allows your faith to even grow and develop. It allows us to find like-minded people.

One of the struggles that often our children have, whether they're in elementary, middle school, or high school, is that you know I'll ask, "Hey, how are you doing with friends and with people at school?" And often the response I hear is, "You know, it's really hard going to public school because there's just not a lot of people that think like I do. There's not a lot of people that have faith in God or even care about that. And so it's hard to make that connection.

And so that's why I encourage them, come to church, come to youth group, you know build some friendships because I know how important it is to go through those difficult years of your life with at least one person who you know has your back. God provided that one person for me, and I can't tell you how valuable it was to have another believer, another young man that I could go through adolescence with and know that I'm not alone. And when we serve others, when you do that with other people, as the youth serve, you begin to make a friendship, a bond that lasts for a long time.

Which leads me to number four, I've already said, serving increases our faith. It increases our faith. You see, when we serve others, we are forced out of our comfort zone to participate in things that we probably never would. And oftentimes, when we are serving others, God does things that we never thought God would do. God accomplishes the impossible. Our eyes are open to new opportunities. If you're like me, I often put God in a box.

And I read about the God of Scripture and how he heals people and he does all these amazing things. And I think that's great. That's what he did then. But often today, even when I pray for healing and I know God can heal, I put him in a box and I say, "Yeah, but he's probably not going to." But when we serve others, when we truly lift others up, I have seen and experienced God do things at those times in my life that I haven't experienced at any other time.

Our eyes are open to new opportunities, new possibilities. Ephesians 3:20 says this, "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us." I remember reading this verse for the first time when I was doing Bible quizzing when I was in high school growing up, and we just happened to be doing Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

And I remember reading this, that there is a God who can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. And I thought, "God, I got a pretty big imagination." And yet Paul is saying to the Ephesian church, he's saying to us, "Our God can do immeasurably more than what you could even imagine. Why do I put God in a box? Serving increases our faith.

And finally, serving is good for your soul." Even the secular world has discovered that serving is good for your mind, it's good for your body, it's good for your spirit. Even the secular world has discovered that when you serve others and when you're giving to other people, it can help with depression. It can help with anxiety. When you serve others, your problems, your issues seem to fade away.

So we come to a section of Scripture in Philippians chapter 2 that is one of my favorite sections of Scripture throughout the entire Bible because Paul is going to share with us the mindset of Jesus. This is how Jesus lived. This is what He thought. And when He shares this with us, I like to use this when I think about a marriage relationships, how a husband is supposed to treat a wife, how a wife is supposed to treat a husband, how parents should treat their children, how children should treat their parents, how we should treat our neighbors, even how we should treat those that disagree with us.

Look at what the apostle Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2. He tells us that we are not to look to our own interests, but each of us to the interest of others. In your relationships with one another, have the same

mindset as Christ Jesus. What is that mindset? Who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage or for His own glory or for His own purposes.

But rather, Jesus made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man, he even humbled himself to become obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore, because Jesus did that, God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord.

This is what it's all about. This is a ginormous step that you can take in your spiritual journey when you allow your mind to be transformed to the mind of Christ and you take on the mind of a servant and what you can do for others. Life becomes so much easier when we realize it's not about us. It's not about me.

As a follower of Jesus, I have been called to serve others, and my motive for serving others is love. It's the love that God has shown me. It's the forgiveness that He has given to me. Galatians 5:13, Paul says, "You, my brothers and sisters were called to be free, but don't use your freedom to indulge the flesh. Rather, serve one another humbly in love." Serve one another.

All throughout Scripture, we see this is our model as followers of Jesus Christ. Our motive is not for personal gain or glory. We serve out of love. So who should we serve? Let me give you some examples. We should serve those who cannot give anything in return. You know Growing up in my family, my dad and my mom would often teach me, you know if somebody does something for you, you do something nice in return.

If somebody helps you out, you help them out. There's always this kind of bank account that's running in my mind of people that have given me something and now I owe them something. And so I'm not very good at receiving because of that. And that becomes normal in my mind that when I help somebody else, I don't expect anything in return, but I often help people and they help me back. That's just the world we live in. What would it look like if you intentionally began to serve people that you know are not going to serve you in return? They're not going to give you anything back.

They're not keeping that checklist in their mind of, "Oh, yeah, they came and helped me. I probably should help them. We should serve those who will not give you anything in return. We should serve those who don't follow Jesus. We should intentionally be living in the world in which we live, being the hands and feet of Jesus to those that don't know Him. We should serve those who don't deserve to be served, which would be all of us. But even the person that's working at the fast food restaurant that doesn't really know customer service, we should serve them.

And we certainly should serve the body of Christ as well. You see, learning to serve might be your next step toward Jesus. You might have been raised in the church. You've been coming to church your whole life, but you've always attended church as a consumer. You thought that church was all about you. And now it's like your eyes are being opened to recognize we're a family. We represent Christ to the world. We need to make sure that we are living with the same mindset of Christ Jesus serving others.

That we would serve those outside of these walls. That we would serve our family, our friends, our neighbors, those who don't know Jesus, those who do know Jesus, that you would just find somebody and use the gifts and talents God has given you to be a blessing to them because you will be blessed in return. You really will. I didn't get an opportunity to ask Josh about this beforehand, so hopefully he forgives me if he doesn't want me to share this. He doesn't have a choice, right?

And I said I don't want the focus of this to be serving in the church, but there's just one area that I do want to bring up. You see, Josh came into my office this last week. He's our senior high youth director. And so he works with all of our senior high, male and female, and he's got volunteers that help him with that. But he just came in discouraged this week because he has such a heart to see our young people know Jesus.

And many of you know I was a youth pastor here for nine years, and I loved my time with the teens, but there has been so much that has changed even in the small amount of time that I haven't been in youth ministry. You all need to know that our young people are under attack by the enemy like they never have been before. They truly are. They are facing temptations beyond what we could ever imagine. I mean, when we were teens, we all had temptations.

Men, we all had temptations and things that we struggled with, but you need to know that all of those temptations that we had to go and look for are in their pocket 24/7. I know adults whose minds are fully formed that can't handle the temptations that are in their pocket. And our teens are fighting against that, especially our young men. And Josh came to me because he's discouraged. He says, "I want these young men to know Jesus.

I want them to walk with Jesus." But at this point, there are no other men in our congregation that are going up there to help him with that. Not another man that's up with the senior high. We've got junior high guys. We've got senior high ladies. And so ladies, you're not getting off the hook. If you want to serve, you can serve. But this is a call to men. We need some men that will step up and say, "You know what? I want to invest in the next generation.

I've got my own problems. I've got my own issues. I don't want you to look at me and tell me, "Pastor, I'm too old," or, "I'm too young. You know I'm 70 years old. I can't relate with them anymore." Or, "Hey, I'm still in college. I can't relate with those guys." There's some men here that are like, "Hey, pastor, I didn't even like myself when I was a high school boy. I don't want to work with them." God has given you a perspective. I'm telling you, you can make a difference in their lives. I encourage you. Here's what I want you to do.

I just want you to pray about it. I don't care how old you are, how young you are, all the men, but I want all the women as well because I'm sure they won't turn away women either. I want you just to say, "You know what? I'm going to pray about it this week. I'm going to say, "God, I don't really want to do this." But pastor asked me to, so I'm going to pray. Do you want me to invest in the next generation to point them in the right direction? Because I'm here to tell you, being in youth ministry for as long as I was, this is a pivotal time in our lives.

Almost without fault, outside of a mighty work of God, during these years, the path that these young men and women go on is the path they're going to stay on for the rest of their lives. And it is so crucially important for us to do our best to make sure they are on the right path so that they will serve Jesus the rest of their lives. So would you pray about that this week?

Maybe God is calling you to get out of your comfort zone, to work with some young men or some young women to be the hands and feet of Jesus. At the end of every service, we'll have people on both sides of the sanctuary. If you guys want prayer for anything, it doesn't mean you're volunteering for youth ministry just coming up here, okay? You can have prayer for anything. You're maybe going through a difficult season in your life. That's fine. We have people that would love to pray with you.

If you don't want anyone to bother you, but God's doing something in your heart and you just want to come forward, just come to the altar. No one will bother you. They won't come from the sides to come up. You can just do your business with God at the altar, but I just encourage you to pray. Let me close. Heavenly Father, we pray that Your Spirit would help us to fight against our selfishness. Help us to see others how you see them.

Help us to love others how you have loved us. Help us to serve others in a way that you would receive praise. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.