



SERVE SELFLESSLY
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The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are continuing our series called Life on Mission where we are talking about the mission that God has given us, both individually and as a church. Our hope is that it will help us out of our faith funk and get us back on mission after a year and a half of lethargy and possibly apathy. We will be talking about four more spiritual practices that will get us moving again and help our faith flourish – as we learn this week to serve selflessly together.

SCRIPTURE¹

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Acts 6:1-6 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Romans 12:4-8 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophecy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

1 Corinthians 12:11 The Holy Spirit distributes gifts just as He determines.

OBSERVATION

Five spiritual practices are found and lived out in the Book of Acts which is the story of the very first Christians and churches. What we will see is that they lived their lives on mission – the mission that Jesus gave to them. This is how the Book of Acts begins forty days after Jesus’ resurrection. During that forty days between when Jesus rose from the dead and went up to heaven, He appeared to different people in different places, not only

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

to convince them that He was alive, but to instruct them about what to do next. It had to do with gathering together – they had been scattered out of fear and run for their lives, but now He was back and they re-gathered. Individually, they had names like Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy, and while each individual had a distinct role and a distinct identity, they had took on new identities as their roles and functions contributed to the greater good of the group: The Church, The Body of Christ, The Way and eventually, Christians.

APPLICATION

The early Church was made up of two groups of people: 1) Hellenistic Jews and 2) Hebraic Jews, differentiated by those who lived outside of Israel and those from Israel. They probably acted and dressed differently, but they were all followers or disciples of Jesus. The problem that arose between them was the complaint that Greek widows were being overlooked by the new Church, so the Apostles decided to appoint volunteers who were full of wisdom and The Spirit, to take care of problems as they arose. The seven who responded were Hellenistic Jews who were able to speak the language and culture of the neglected widows; they were uniquely gifted to serve in that capacity and so the Word of God spread. What's interesting about the seven is that, 2000 years later, we know their names because they said "yes" to God's call. Among this group was Philip, who on a trip to Gaza, encountered a Eunuch of Ethiopia.² He witnessed to him and baptized him before the man returned to his homeland and spread the Word there. Even those in charge of sacrifices at the Jewish Temple were coming to Christ because the Gospel was and is so powerful.

QUESTION: What does "feeding widows" have to do with the Word of God spreading?

QUESTION: How are you serving selflessly today? In what capacities?

For us, feeding the widows means parking cars, serving coffee, greeting people, ushering, serving communion, keeping us secure, teaching kids, providing worship music, and feeding widows! Some of us start to feel insignificant or that they don't have something important to offer, but we do in many different ways because our service causes **THE WORD OF GOD TO SPREAD**. We have each been given a mission and a passion: When we serve, God does more to grow our faith than could ever happen just sitting in a church service.

QUESTION: What are your gifts?³

QUESTION: What are your passions?

QUESTION: What do you see that needs to be done at The Crossing today?

We all have gifts and experiences that God uses to serve the Church. And they are different gifts determined by God Himself – given to us for His glory. We are to be faithful in using those gifts. St. Paul talks about the unique parts of our physical bodies – eyes, ears, hands, feet, tongues, brains, bones, spleens – all working together to function in unison as a perfect whole – The Church.

QUESTION: How are you treating this wonderful body you live in today? How are you exercising it, feeding it, resting it, and enjoying it in ways that glorify God?

We can't see very far ahead of ourselves, just like the half blind rhinos. They just "crash" ahead with their mighty power and **LOOK OUT!** Just as the rhinos can't see what lays ahead, we don't know what the future holds, but when God's Church acts like God's Church; when we all come together and serve; when we're empowered by the Spirit of God, it doesn't matter what the obstacles are - we had better watch out because God's Almighty power is moving forward. Somewhere in the world is someone whose life, whose marriage, whose child will be changed because we stepped forward and served selflessly. There is a story yet to be told. We do what only we can do, let God do what only He can do, and we'll be amazed at what we can do together.

QUESTION: How has your Christian fellowship improved since serving at The Crossing?

QUESTION: Who are the new friends you are enjoying today because you decided to serve here?

QUESTION: What do we call a group of flamingos? (Hint: Liberace probably named it!)

² Acts 8:26-39

³ Free Spiritual Gift Assessments can be found: www.gregwiens.com/gifts

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, show us the gifts You have given us to use in service to You. Give us joy and faith unshakable as we step forward in helping others because we know in this way Your Word will be spread throughout the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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