

## Choose To Serve

2 Timothy 1:9

Today in the choose sermon series we talk about choosing to serve. Specifically "Choosing Action over Apathy". What motivates us from apathy to action; from mediocrity to moving for the glory of God; from a religious consumer, which is a problem in the contemporary church, to move from being a religious consumer, a consumer of religion to becoming a passionate follower of Jesus Christ. God has called us, not to complacency but commitment. I want to live in joyful, active, obedience all the days of my life! This isn't automatic; it requires discipline over indulgence!

God has given us a life. What we do with that life, just as that life is God's gift to us, what we do with that life is now our gift back to God. May God give us true obedience and tough resilience, and tenacious vigilance and diligence at our jobs, at our church, in our families, in our homes! Jesus said, "*Work, for the hour is coming when no man will be able to work.*" John 9:4 Work while it is day, for there's coming a time when day will be done and the crops will be in, and only what we've done for Jesus Christ will last.

In 2 Timothy 1 when the Apostle Paul writes to his young pastor protégé he elevates his service to a “calling.” He is telling all of us we have a calling in our lives. The phrase “holy calling” conveys the idea of being set apart by God for a sacred purpose. Paul is affirming the point that God expects us to serve. Whenever God creates anything, He creates it on purpose. He creates it with purpose. He creates it for His purpose. We were created for service. We were custom-built and divinely designed. There is nobody just like you. There has never been anybody just like you, and there will never be anybody just like you for all eternity. Why did God do that? God made us the way we are so we could serve Him the way He wants us to serve and make a difference in the lives of others. You’re unique; I’m unique. You’re one of a kind; I’m one of a kind because we all have a unique purpose, a unique function, and a unique service to fulfill and perform. God didn’t just create us to serve, He called us to serve. When Jesus called you to be saved, He called you to serve.

The reason you are here is you’ve got service to do. You’ve got a function to fulfill and a purpose for your life. When we serve others, we are serving Him, so God positively expects us—all of us—to serve.

*“It is God who has called us and chose us for His holy work.”* 2 Timothy 1:9

The words “holy work” mean ministry. Every one of us has been called to a “holy work” – a ministry. Serving is not what we do, it’s who we are. It's not how long you live that matters, it's how you live that matters. When Reece Witherspoon accepted the Academy Award for her portrayal of June Carter Cash in the movie “Walk The Line,” she quoted June Carter Cash in her acceptance speech, saying, “I'm trying to live a life that matters.” - Reece Witherspoon

How do we live a life that matters? What makes your life matter? What makes your life count? We want to know that what we’re doing matters to God, and we’re doing what God wants. We want to help you discover your gift, develop your gift, and deploy your gift—serving God and serving others.

*“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*  
Mark 10:45, Matthew 20:28

If Jesus loved us enough to serve us by dying for us, can we not love Jesus enough to live for Him by serving others? If He loved me enough to go to a cross and die for us, can we not love Him enough to find some place to serve others? There are many ways to serve: park cars, greet people, rock babies, teach children Bible verses, or mentor middle schoolers and high schoolers about how to walk with God.

*Three Questions we will answer today:*

Where are you serving?

Who are you serving?

When are you serving?

You ought to be able to answer those questions. If you can't answer all three of those questions, you may be wasting the big opportunity called life.

“Serve” means you live your life for God.

“Serve” means you give yourself to God.

They were saying, “We have been serving God, and it has not been a fulfilling experience. It hasn’t paid off.”

- God DESERVES to be served.
- God DESIRES to be served.
- God DEMANDS to be served.

*“Your words against Me have been harsh,” says the LORD. “Yet you ask, ‘What have we spoken against You?’ You have said, ‘Does it pay to serve God?’”* Malachi 3:13

The people in the day of Malachi had decided that it didn’t pay to serve God. The theme of the passage is “Serving God.” Those who do not serve God see little benefit in contrast to those who do serve God and enjoy the benefits. They were asking, “What are we getting out of it?” The word “gain” was used when someone expected their cut of the deal. They questioned God’s payoff. Their conclusion was, “We’re no better off.” They felt that serving was useless with little reward.

Does it pay to serve God? The answer is yes!! There is nothing as fulfilling as serving God. There are a lot of people who regret that they did not serve God, but no one has ever regretted serving God. The happiest people in the world are those who give their life serving God.

### 1. When We Serve, We Realize Our Purpose.

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you...”* Jeremiah 1:5

*“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* Jeremiah 29:11

*“You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.”* Psalm 139:16

*“Teach me to serve You with complete devotion.”* Psalm 86:11

*“Serve the Lord with gladness.”* Psalm 100:2

*“With all my heart, I try to serve You.”* Psalm 119:10

- God planned a life of service for you.

*“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10*

Before you were born, God planned a life of service for you. The reason why so many people are miserable and feel empty is because they’ve missed the point of life.

- Serving Is The Best Use Of Your Life.

*“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” Romans 12:1*

*“All of you together are the one body of Christ and each of you is a separate and necessary part of it.” 1 Corinthians 12:27*

God intended for us to accomplish some things together.

## 2. When We Serve, We Reach Our Potential.

*“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10*

God has given each of you some special abilities. Be sure to use them to help each other. You’re gifted, called, and set apart to use your gifts to make a difference in the world. God never intended for the Church to be a building.

*“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.” Romans 12:6*

We all have a gift, and that gift makes us a gift to the world. God gave you gifts to make a difference in the lives of the people around you. Moses and Esther used their leadership gifts to lead people out of bondage and danger. Nehemiah used his gift to rebuild a wall and a city. Dorcas used her gift of sewing to serve the church. Every gift and talent you have come directly from God for a purpose, and He wants you to use them to benefit the body of Christ.

God wants you to use your gifts in the Church to minister to people for His glory. God wants every person to be active, making a difference in the Church. God wants His Church to be full of people using their gifts to make a difference in the lives of others.

- Serving Connects Me To The Body Of Christ, The Family Of God.

*“You are part of the body of Christ and now you belong to Him in order that we might be useful in the service of God.” Romans 7:4*

We were saved to serve God. We become more together than we could ever be alone. We accomplish more together than we could ever accomplish alone. There is a place for every one of us in ministry.

## 3. When I’m Serving Others, I Am Serving God.

- God Calls Us To Serve As His Church.

*“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:14-16*

*“Together, we are his house...carefully joined together in Him.”* Ephesians 2:22

God always intended for the Church to be His people. We don't go to church, we are the Church. We are the Church, and we're here for the world.

*“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy 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.”* Romans 12:6-8

- When We Serve, We Become A Contributor, Not A Consumer.

We believe the local church is the hope of the world, and God is going to stir up His Church to do more than we ever thought possible.

*“Meanwhile his disciples urged him, ‘Rabbi, eat something.’ But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you do not know about.’ Then his disciples said to each other, ‘Could someone have brought him food?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.”* John 4:31-36

We become easily self-focused. Everyone else thinks, “Fill me,” but Jesus said, “What actually fills Me is to fill others.” Jesus was saying, “What nourishes Me is to pour into the lives of others, to do the work of God, and finish the task that God sent Me to do.” The disciples were all concerned about consumption. “We’ve got to take care of ourselves.”

Jesus was not concerned with consuming. He was concerned with contributing. When He contributed into the lives of others, it actually nourished Him in a way that is beyond our ability to understand. Jesus is saying, “I have a higher calling than just thinking about Me. I want to contribute into the lives of others.”

The consumer mindset has bled over into the local Church. We are spiritual contributors because we understand that the Church does not exist for us. We are the Church, and we exist for the world. We are spiritual contributors, not consumers. Our food is something many people don't understand. It is to do the work and the will of God, and that nourishes us. We are the Church, and we exist to bring the love of Jesus into the world.

#### 4. Serving Is Our Natural Response To God's Pardon.

*“Because of God's great mercy to us, offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God dedicated to His service and pleasing to Him.”* Romans 12:1

We serve because we are in debt to God. We serve the Lord because of what He has done for us. We serve because we are grateful. Grace should always result in gratitude.

*“Serve the Lord with gladness ...”* Psalm 100:2

#### 5. Our Service Will Be Rewarded By God Personally.

Jesus said, *“My Father will honor the ones who serve Me.”* John 12:26

*“Well done, good and faithful servants. You've been faithful in a few things. I'll put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness.”* Matthew 25:21

*“Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”*  
Colossians 3:24

*“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.”* Matthew 16:27

*“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven.”* Luke 6:23

*“Keep busy in your work for the Lord, since you know that nothing you do in the Lord’s service is ever without value.”* 1 Corinthians 15:58

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”* Colossians 3:23-24

*“Because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.”*  
Ephesians 6:8

*“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ‘Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ 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.’”* Matthew 25:31-40

1 Corinthians 15:58 is the conclusion of Paul’s explanation of the theology of the resurrection. It ends in verse 58, *“Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, you know your labor is not in vain in the Lord”*.

Hebrews 6:12 says: *“So that you may be not sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promise”*. You know what gives you creditability for Christ and the Gospel at your office with your co-workers is your strong work ethic. The Christian ought to do more than the average, better than the average! God has called us not to just do an okay job or to do our duties, but to exceed with excellence. *“Excellence in all things, and all things to the glory of God”*.

## 6. When We Serve, We Are Serving Jesus.

*“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”* Matthew 25:35-36

- When you add value to other people, you add value to God.

*“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?”* Matthew 25:37-39

Jesus values people. We should value people. If you don't see Jesus when you see people, then you don't see the big picture clearly. The assumption is that they would have helped if they saw Jesus, but they did not see Jesus, so they missed it. They did more than miss the opportunity, they missed Jesus. If I see a person and I don't see Jesus, then I missed the big picture.

Even the people who did the acts didn't know it was Jesus. We need to see Jesus in them and serve Jesus through them.

The happiest people in the world are those who give their life serving God. Everyone has the opportunity to add value to people. When we add value to others, there is no insignificant act.

*“Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”* Matthew 25:45

The things seemed so small, but Jesus said they were big. The people who did these things would have done more if they saw Jesus. Those who did not see Jesus said if they had seen Him, they would have done something. When we see Jesus, it changes us and changes them. The person who is overlooked and ignored doesn't see Jesus either. They see Jesus through your acts. Be intentional to increase your acts of service. Everything worthwhile is uphill. There is nothing worthwhile that is downhill. Nothing's automatic or easy or by chance.

- When I Am Serving, I Add Value To People.

You are the most like Jesus when you value people. Jesus loved people, and Jesus values everybody. Most of us have a person who is hard to value. Jesus values the overlooked and the ignored. Only religious people were messed up by the people Jesus valued. When are we going to stop correcting people and start connecting people?

Everyone needs a friend, so I've decided to be their friend.  
Everyone has good in their life, and I've gone after the good.  
Everyone wants to feel valued, so I've decided to add value.  
Everyone can help me, so I've decided to receive it.  
Everyone wants to better their life, and I will help them better their life.  
Everyone has something to give, so I give them an opportunity to share.

- Every Day I Have To Think Of Ways To Add Value To People.

Think ahead. Who will I meet, and what will I do today?

Open doors for people.  
Smile and tell them to have a good day.  
Compliment and encourage them.

- Every Day I Will Look For Ways To Add Value To People.

When you become intentional, you will see ways to add value to people. If not, you'll see people and never see ways to add value.

- Every Day I Must Do Things That Add Value To People.

Inventory your day and ask yourself, “Who did I add value to, and how did I add value to them?”

Good intentions are no good unless they become good actions.

- Every Day I Will Encourage Others To Add Value To People.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY NEEDS YOU TO SERVE.

The number one challenge is to be available to serve.

We don't have to be perfect to render service to people for God.

God intended for us to accomplish some things together.

Be A Participator, Not A Spectator.

Choose Commitment over Convenience.