

How to Serve the Lord - Ministry - Deaconing

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 November 2008

[0:00] For I was unhungered, and you gave me meat. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you took me in. Naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee unhungered, and fed thee, or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto thee, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these, the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me. He goes on to speak to the others who didn't do that, and of their judgment. Friends, we're talking about ministry. We're talking about serving one another.

And I've got a few little slides just to picture what we're talking about today. And of course, we can see pictured here our Lord, an example that He gave for washing the disciples' feet, of ministry, of serving, of service.

And what a picture that is to us. And the Lord Jesus says to us, that in this passage we've just read, of course it's got an application to nations, and you could apply this in various ways.

But just to illustrate the point of ministry and serving, we can see in this example of our Lord, how He referred to ministry or serving as being very much a special thing that's unto Him.

And the first thing I'd like to mention is the meaning of ministry. Ministry, the word means service. I know someone was asking me of late, and I tried to do some study and research on the topic, and they asked about deacons.

[1:47] And as a church, we believe in the office of a pastor, the office of a deacon. Now, we don't presently have a deacon as such at this time, but that's not to say that in the future we will.

But it's interesting, the word deacon comes from a Greek term diakonos, which simply means minister or servant. And it's used in the New Testament in a general sense of one who serves. However, in a few passages it is used to refer to those who occupy a particular position of service in the early church. And the Greek words diakonos, which means servant, diakonia, means service, diakon, maho, however you say it, means to serve.

And these are used at least 100 times in the New Testament. The original sense of those words referred to serving. Serving.

1 Timothy 3, diakonos is transliterated rather than translated into the English word deacon. And the word deacon, which is used in our New Testament, is used in a number of ways in the New Testament.

[2:58] It has the basic idea of being a servant. Being a servant or a minister. One who supplies a need or gives aid to others. And there are deacons at general levels, at several levels.

It's got really that sense of the word, of the general term, of the general sense of the word deacon, that it means minister or servant. And really, you could say all believers are servants.

We should be, shouldn't we? We should be serving our Lord. We should be serving one another. And so in that sense, as it says, the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 20, how the greatest among you shall be your servant.

Now, I want to tell you this morning that there's some people who are real servants. Now, I married one. And she's a blessing to me. She's a servant to me.

She looks after me. She cooks me nice meals. And makes sure I look nice with the clothes that I looked after. And handers to my every need.

[4:04] And she is, I mean really, she is the chief servant of the church, isn't she? She's looking after you, Pastor. She's taking care of the day by day.

Is she here today? You know, it says that her husband will rise up and call her blessed. Amen. You know, I thank the Lord I've got a Proverbs 31 life.

Amen. And having a wonderful servant, a wonderful minister, a wonderful deacon in my life is my lovely wife.

And like that too, each one of us can be a deacon. We can be a servant of the church. Using that primary sense of the word of service as the root meaning of the sense of it.

And I was kind of tongue-in-cheek thinking about this a little bit and how you could describe it. Now, I believe the word deacon is a male office. So I'm not meaning to deny that.

[4:59] But in the sense that for all of us, men and women, there's a deaconing going on in church for you. There's a deaconing, a serving going on in church for you all of the time.

In lots of different kind of capacities and ways. And I was thinking as I thought about it, how in a sense you could say we have Deacon Ian, the bus driver. That is a ministry.

Amen. If you want a ministry this morning, there's an opportunity. There's vacancies. Deacon Ian, the bus driver. We've got Deacon Pablo and Allison working in the Sunday school.

What a ministry. Deacon Audrey running the library. That's a deacon, isn't it? Deacon Julie playing the organ. We've got Deacon Roy as the treasurer. Deacon Jim as the committee support.

Deacon Marjorie setting up the communion for the morning service. And it's all about serving brothers and sisters, isn't it? Now, I'm not taking away the sense that there is a sense of the biblical office of a deacon.

[5:59] And that's something that's a setting apart of someone for that particular ministry and role. There's a special role and there's certain requirements that a person has to thoroughly meet for them to be willing and able to serve.

But beyond that, there's a sense of deaconing about the church. That all of us should be deacons. All of us should be servants at heart. Serving the Lord. Mobilizing the church to serve the Lord. To serve one another. I read a great book some time back. It's called Unleashing the Church. Unleashing the Church. Who's read that? Have you seen that? It's a great book. It talks about how there's so many opportunities for you and I in our different talents and abilities to be able to serve the Lord.

Now, I was encouraged lately. There's been lots of new faces in our church. And I thank the Lord for all the new people that have come in the last three, four months or so. There are many folk that are new to the church that are still settling in.

And someone came up to me and said, I want to be involved. And I thought, well, we can give him a job in a minute. And I thought, you know, it's nice to have people who have got an attitude that they want to serve.

[7:09] They want to serve. They want to be doing something. They want to be an active Christian. And I thank the Lord for that one that has said that to me. And certainly we encourage people to have that heart attitude.

They want to serve the Lord. And it's not about having so much a label or a title as about the serving of the Lord, to serve one another, to be about the serving of God in all of our capacities. And that's a very healthy thing. And that makes us a healthy church when we have that kind of thing going on. And so it's about service. That's the meaning of the word. And we see that there, pictured in a sense in this passage we've just read in Matthew 25.

What were the people praised for? They were praised for really lots of practical things, weren't they? As our Lord says, I was hungry. I was thirsty. I was a stranger. Naked. Sick. Prison. And you did something for me. By what? By doing it for the least of these, my brethren. By how you treat one another. By how you go about the work. The word says to do good to all men, but especially to those that are of the household of faith.

[8:15] Do good. Do good. Be about the work. Be about caring for one another. Ministry means service. It means ministry to people in practical

ways. And that reflects our ministry to the body, to the Lord.

And we see, pictured in this little passage, that ministry means a meeting of needs. Ministry means meeting needs.

Now, brothers, sisters, open your eyes. There's lots of opportunity to serve. There's lots of opportunity to serve. Now, many folk here are much older than me.

And you might think, well, you know, I'm pretty restricted. Maybe driving a bus might be a bit hard for some folk here today, for example. But I know an elderly chap who loves the Lord, and he helps print many of these tracks.

He's got a burden for tracks. And he's, I think he's 85, around about that vintage. And he prints these tracks. Now, he does it off his own bat.

[9:17] He just goes and does it. He has a chap to me every so often, and he just goes and prints them. And more than that, this man, he gets on his gopher, because he can hardly walk. He's like this at times, you know.

He gets on his gopher, and he gives out those tracks. He puts them in letterboxes now. Now, you could say, well, that's, you know, maybe that's beyond your physical capacity today. But these are people who, this is a man who loves the Lord.

And he wants to serve. He's about meeting the needs. He's about seeing the need and meeting the need. And, friends, there's lots of lost souls about us that we can minister to and reach out to. They need the message, and it's really, God's not going to come down and do it.

He's called you. He's told you to do it. He's told me to do it. Friends, we're his hand extended. And, brothers and sisters, we see the need all around about us. And, thirdly, we see that ministry, the motivation for ministry is that ministry is answer the Lord.

It's answer the Lord. It's not a ministry that is, sometimes we may not feel like it. Ministry isn't always about what's comfortable and what's easy and what's pleasant and what we even want to do half the time.

[10:32] Sometimes that can happen. It's about ministry is answer the Lord. And if you love the Lord, you will put yourself out. If you love the Lord, you will go the extra mile for a brother, for a sister.

Don't leave it until it's too late. We've got a job to do. And we have to think about the needs around us, of the opportunities that we see about us.

Let's go. Let's go.

I'm sorry. For you.

What are you going to do for shoes? The passage we started with was what we do unto the least of these we do unto Him.

[12:31] And ministry is about serving, meeting needs, about ministries to the Lord. Let it be unto the Lord that what you do is unto the Lord. It's not unto the pastor. It's not unto the church. It's not because you feel like it.

It's because you love the Lord and you want to honour and please Him. Brothers and sisters, that's what I want to challenge you with today. And think about ways that you can minister in different ways.

So just bear with me. There we go. How can I serve? That's the question for you today. For everyone seated here today in this place. How can I serve?

How can I serve the Lord? About five things. This is from a source that I wouldn't necessarily recommend all of these preachers on about. So first one, think about how can I serve the Lord? Think about your spiritual gifts. Every one of us has got different gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to each one of us as His people. And a spiritual gift is a special ability given by the Lord to help us to serve Him.

[13:30] Help us to build up the body, to minister to one another. And we may have more than one spiritual gift. They are different from natural talents. It could be gifts that communicate God's Word, that educate God's people, that demonstrate God's love, that support other people.

And friends, you've got a gift. Unwrap it. Think about, find out, study the Bible and think about what has God given me to give to others, to give to the church, to discover your gift by doing it.

Sometimes you've got to step outside the comfort zone too. And do what you think, well, has God given me a gift to do something? Maybe I'll just test the waters, just step out in faith. And your primary ministry commitment will hopefully be in an area where you're gifted, where God has given you something special by His Holy Spirit's enabling. The next one, secondly, H stands for heart.

But what has God put on your heart? The real you. What is your passion? What is it that helps you to have a joy, to be fulfilled, to do well, to enjoy serving God?

[14:39] Third one is A, which stands for abilities. Abilities are the knowledge you have, the abilities you have, the natural abilities you have. The things you've been trained in maybe outside of church, in your day-by-day life.

Your abilities that you've grown and that you've kind of developed over time. And then P stands for your personality. We've all got different personalities.

Not all of us search certain roles or certain responsibilities. What are the kind of tasks that you prefer to do? What are the kind of things that you love to do, that you enjoy doing, whether it's relating with other people?

How do you make your decisions? That sort of make-up that we all have. And that will also help us to decide how can I best serve the Lord? And lastly is experience.

Your experiences, everything through life. We've all got different life experiences. And God uses our experiences to teach us to trust Him, to build our character. Sometimes there could be painful experiences or trials that God has brought your way.

[15:46] We're all designed differently. We've all got a different scope of things that we can do to serve the Lord. Now, of course, we're talking, there's a sense where there's spiritual gifts, there's God's enabling.

There's also those natural talents and abilities. So, we'll move on to that. In the Bible, there's various lists of gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, there's various lists of gifts.

Now, this picks out some of the main gifts in the Bible. And it'll ask you some various questions about what do you enjoy doing? What do you feel that you're motivated to do?

What is it that you feel that you've got the ability to do? That sense of serving God to do? So, have a read through this one called Spiritual Gifts Inventory. And it'll talk through these various gifts. And we'll just touch on them briefly. And secondly, I've got this other one that I've put together from various sources on the internet. That, again, along the same line, about asking people to think about the areas that they can serve the Lord.

[16:50] The way that you can serve the Lord by being an active member of the church here in this place. How can God use you? What can you give?

Now, as I was saying earlier, there's many new faces amongst us. And sometimes I know that I put people on the spot half the time, asking people to do various things.

And I don't want to have to embarrass anyone by approaching someone to do something that you really prefer not to do. But then again, maybe that's your flesh too. But, you know, sometimes I don't want to come to you and say, look, can you do this or that?

When that's what you'd rather do some other kind of ministry, some other way of serving the Lord. And so for you to find the best fit and for me to know how the Lord's leading you in your life, how you want to be an active part of what's happening here in this church, that you can make that known to me by filling out this little form and ticking the boxes to say the kinds of ministries, the gifts and skills that you'd like to use in ministry.

And also on the back there you can say that you'd like to serve in whatever area it might be, how the church can improve, how we can look at new programs and services that we don't offer.

[18:06] Now, my practice has been to develop a roster where I put people against various responsibilities. Now, that's work by and large, but not always.

And I'm thinking, well, now's a good time with some fresh people here today to think about how can you serve the Lord in this place? How can you help with the ministry? There's so many opportunities to serve.

And like I was saying before, sometimes it's not necessarily what your preference is too. Serving the Lord might be like that man in the film that wasn't probably comfortable for him to give away his shoes.

Sometimes ministry means sacrifice, doesn't it? It might mean stepping outside the comfort zone and in faith doing what God has given you the skill to do, giving you the energy to do.

So it's a bit different, some of the things we're not doing presently, but please, as the Lord leads, consider that. Now, that's been gathered from various sources. It's not my original work, but I put it together as a collection of material.

[19:13] And likewise, this one has been developed by another church. So, look, just quickly flick through the slides if we can, just to talk about, for example, music, singing, playing instruments.

That can apply to young people that might be amongst us too, that might be able to play an instrument and help with that ministry. Next is teaching.

Teaching. The gift of teaching children and adults, teaching young girls. At times we've had a girls club where the older women have taught the younger women, as the Bible tells us to.

And boys clubs, we've had a youth group that was just boys at one time. We can do that again. But we need people to stand in the gap. We need people to put their hand up and say, I want to serve the Lord, and that's something that I'd really love to do.

Next is wisdom. We all need help, counselling, guiding other people. Next. Craftsmanship. Arts and crafts.

[20:12] There's men and women with different skills. Men with handyman skills, with talents to make and create things. And women too. Arts and crafts. We could look at that opportunity.

So we've talked about music as well, playing instruments as we said. Hospitality. Giving hospitality. Caring for a people, other people, for those in need.

And that can take many forms. If you've got a calling to have hospitality, you like making meals and organising social events, then we'd love to have that opportunity to invite people to come to church too.

We've got the next one. It's exhortation. We all need a bit of exhorting. As it says, exhort one another. Encourage one another. Shepherding. Caring for people.

There's lots of opportunity to show care and consideration. Next. Evangelism. A big need, isn't it? Mercy.

[21:12] Considering one another too. Next one. Next one. You're serving there. Lots of opportunities to serve.

Like helping with practical needs around the place. There's lots of practical things that need doing. But if you can at least tell me what you feel that God is putting on your heart to do.

And that could guide me. I can help you to grow and to take those responsibilities on. And brothers and sisters, we're going to close it just now with a challenge to you today. This is about you.

It's your church. It's church for you. It's about what do you want this church to be? We can think about the future. How can we grow this church? How can we grow? How can you grow individually as people?

It's about you taking your part. The Word talks about body ministry. How every part of the body has got a function, has got a responsibility.

[22:09] Every member has got something to contribute, to function. And we know in the natural body, if one member of the body, one part of the body isn't functioning well, it affects the whole body, doesn't it?

I like that too. Every member needs to contribute. Contribute your gifts and callings, your talents and abilities. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you today for everybody here that, Lord, we're all ministers today.

We're all your servants and deacons in a sense. We've all got something we can give to serve, to love, to live. To honour you. Lord, to help your church grow.

That might be a place of an active bunch of people that love you and want to serve and live for you. Day by day, 24 by 7. Lord, help us to have that heart that wants to serve, that wants to sacrifice, that wants to give.

And to be laid on the altar as a living sacrifice, Lord, that our bodies can be used by you, your temples to fill and to walk around in, Lord, in these days ahead.
[23:17] As you help us too, we thank you, Lord. In Jesus' wonderful name.
Amen. Amen. Thank you.