

How to Serve God

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[0:00] I want to talk just now about serving the Lord. Serving the Lord. And being a servant of God, it's one of the highest and best things we can have in our lives and be.

A phrase. My servant. My servant. He says, my servant Abraham. My servant Moses. My servant Caleb. My servant David. My servant Job.

And Mary herself called herself a maidservant. A handmaid of the Lord. Servants and handmaids of the Lord. That's what we want to talk about just now.

And think about that for yourself. How can we put this servanthood into action? How can we make it live and walk in our shoes? In this world. In what is a self-serving world of times. John 12. We read in verse 26 that our Lord says, If any man serve me, let him follow me. And where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my father honour.

It's saying there, if you serve the Lord, he will honour you. If you serve the Lord, you will receive honour. It's been said that we are saved to serve. It's what follows on from being saved is that we want to serve God.

[1:52] Our works don't save us, but as safe people, we want to serve. We want to work. And lots of people like to serve in church. There's a saying that goes, some people like to serve as consultants.

Now there's no shortage of people who will tell you what needs to be done in the church. You know, I often get people come up to me and say, oh this needs doing and that needs doing. Well, do it yourself.

The quote goes on, no shortage of people who will tell you everything that is wrong with the church. I could give you a list myself. But these same people are never the ones who are willing to roll up their sleeves and shoulder the load with those who are doing more than their share of service.

God wants us all to roll up our sleeves and get engaged, get involved. So how are we to serve the Lord? I'll put it to you, some characteristics of God's servants and things that we should aspire to have.

Some characteristics that we should want to have in our lives. How are we to serve our God? Serve with humility.

[3:03] With humility. Our Lord is a role model for us. He's the model servant, isn't he? Philippians 2, that familiar one, it says, You know, I like to say, I've said this before, there's a dress code in our church.

There's a dress code in our church and everyone has to dress with this. It says, be clothed with humility. Be clothed with humility.

And this one who washed the feet of his own creation is the one who is our model of just that, humility. One writer wrote to this day when our Lord was in that room with his beloved disciples.

The quote goes like this, The room was filled with proud hearts and dirty feet. The disciples were willing to fight for a throne, but not for a tower.

You know, they were fighting and clashing. There was times when there was a bit of argy-bargy and talking about who's going to sit next to him when he comes. And yet our Lord showed that which we are to serve.

[4:29] And in our self-serving, selfie culture world that we live in, this world with the me first mentality, it seems like servanthood is close to extinction.

Where are the servants? The servants. And I believe that we can know what it is to have that servant heart, that servant mentality, that we're ready to serve with grace the others that God puts in our lives.

You know, sometimes it's hard to serve some people. They irk you and get up your nose, so to speak. But we know that God's put people in our lives that sometimes are the sandpaper that we need to keep us humble.

And he wants us all to take the servant's towel, as it were, as our Lord did. It was the servant's job to clean the feet, and everyone forgot. But Jesus stepped down and wore the towel of a servant. It starts with humility. Humility is that character quality that's essential for us. If you want to serve God, be willing to be humble. So do the humble things.

[5:41] I thank God for those people who help in lots of ways. There was a time when I was the bus driver, and I was picking up people morning and night, midweek, and youth group, and I was running the youth group and the Bible study, and the morning and evening services from go to woe.

But I thank God that God's brought people into this church who can help us, with our assistant pastor here, with Brad and Edmund, other able speakers who can step in and help fill those gaps, with Ian driving the bus, faithfully picking people up, with the youth ministry people that the Lord's brought along to help run the youth ministry, and other ministries, the Bible studies, people are helping in those areas.

Because everyone's playing a different role, a different part. And I don't have to drive the bus morning and night and midweek anymore, because God's brought others along, faithful servants, humble servants.

I used to put out the signs for this church, before the service, for a few days, and then picking them up after the service.

But God's brought a faithful man, a humble servant, who's willing to do that now for me, and has taken that load off of me. And I thank God for that man. Thank God for humble servants.

[6:58] People are willing to do the humble things. You know, there's times when Jillian and I used to have to put all the chairs out and clean, but God's brought other people along now, who can clean this church, and help with those menial things, yet important things, so vitally, critically important things, that help this church to run.

And it starts with humility. Brothers and sisters, God's calling us to have that essential character quality. And guess what? When you get saved, you join the ministry. Alright?

You join the ministry. You are a minister. You know, the word minister, it just means servant. Some people think, oh, minister, you've got to be trained for that. You've got to be qualified.

You've got to have a certificate on the wall. You've got to have letters after your name. Or, you know, no. When you're saved, you're called to the ministry. Every one of us are called to the ministry, as it were.

It's a full-time ministry, too. It's not like you're a casual minister. We're all full-time. And there is a work for all of us to do. All of us.

[8:00] Ministry is just another word for service. And we can all find ways to serve God in humility. As we serve others practically.

As we serve others meaningfully, unselfishly. Some might just stand back and watch. And not get their hands dirty. They do not put their shoulder to the wheel. It was said one time that during the American Revolution, there was a man in civilian clothes riding past a group of soldiers laboring to repair a small defensive barrier.

And there they were working really hard trying to move this barrier. And their leader was there, shouting instructions at them, pointing at them, telling them what to do, but making no attempt to help them himself.

Asked why by the rider, he retorted with great dignity, sir, I am a corporal. Now, a corporal has the next level up, you know.

And the stranger apologised. He got off his horse. He dismounted and he proceeded to help the exhausted soldiers. And he got alongside them and got involved, got his hands dirty, as it were, and got the job done.

[9:14] And he turned to the corporal and he said, Mr Corporal, next time you have a job like this and not enough men to do it, go to your commander-in-chief and I will come and help you again.

This was the general to become president, George Washington. He wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty and to do the humble things that needed to be done. And we need to have that character trait, brothers and sisters.

We need to have that humility to take the lowest place. When you see something that needs doing, don't expect someone else to do it. Do it yourself. God helping you.

He who will be great among you, the Lord says, let him be your servant, your minister. So find what needs doing and do it. And do it mightily. Do it for God's glory and serve with humility.

Secondly, serve with gladness. It's not an irksome thing to serve God. It's a blessing. It's a blessing. Have a heart to serve. We serve God gladly, not grudgingly.

[10:19] Psalm 100 verse 2, it says, Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before his presence but singing. Serve him with gladness, it says. Be willing to serve.

Be glad to serve. Delight to do God's will. To serve God is an opportunity more than an obligation. And as we serve God with that spirit, joyfully and freely, as we place pleasing God at the priority, at the centre of our lives, of our decision making, it will be our priority.

We'll make it a priority. We'll say, I'm going to put that in my calendar and let everything else fall around it. Or I'm not available. We put God and serving him as the priority.

And it's our great joy and our privilege to minister, to serve and love and give to one another. Our life said it's more blessed to give than to receive. It's a blessing in serving.

You know, some people come to church to serve, to be served. But really, we're here to serve. We're meant to be workers, co-workers, co-labourers.

[11:29] And it's more blessed to give than to receive. And that's true not just of money, but of our time, of our energy, of our devotion, of our serving. And as we serve others, there's a blessing we get.

When you think, well, I blessed someone today. I gave something to someone. I spent some time. I did something to bless someone. And you get a blessing from that, don't you?

I do. I do. And I know you do. As you give in service to God, to others, there's a joy that comes. You know, there's a blessing that comes.

I know just putting out those signs, I think, someone's going to come because they saw that sign.

And some people do come to this church because they see the signs. We don't put the signs out. How do they know we're here?

It's an important job. And it's an important job picking up people for church who don't have their own transport. And there's a blessing that comes as we know, wow, I'll help someone get there today.

[12:28] I'll help to encourage someone in their faith. And there's a joy in giving our service to God. So serving with gladness. Do it gladly, joyfully. A printer put it like this.

Many people are waiting for the right time and the right place to start serving. Let me tell you, the right time to serve is now.

And the right place to serve is right where you are. Bloom where you're planted. Find those opportunities.

We're glad to serve God. There's a joy there. As his true servants will search out eagerly for opportunities to serve. In whatever way we can, wherever we can, whenever we can.

And whatsoever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, not unto men. Serve from the heart. When you're serving others, you're doing it for God's glory. You might not get a pat on the back.

[13:25] You might not even get a thank you for it. That's okay. The thank yous will come later. The thank yous will come later. Amen. When we see him, he'll say thank you.

And so do it heartily what you do for God. As to him, not to men. So serve with humility. Serve with gladness. Another one, serve with excellence. Excellence.

With excellence. God is worthy of your best gifts. Of your best efforts. Just as Daniel. We read of him in Daniel 6 verse 3.

That this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

And recognised there was something excellent about Daniel. God wants excellence. Excellence. You might think, well my excellence isn't really that good. Give of your best.

[14:24] That's good enough. Give of your best. Do your best for God. Be your best that you can be for God. And God will help you to be even better. Even better.

When Solomon built the temple, silver was not good enough. He refused the silver because it was not good enough to be used in God's temple. He wanted gold. God wants your gold.

He wants you to be a gold standard Christian. He wants you to be an excellent Christian. He wants you to be an excellent, have an excellent spirit. You want to excel in that which is good. Be excellent at what is good.

Excel in spiritual gifts. Excel. Serve to the best of your ability. Don't settle for second rate or half measures.

When you give to God, when you serve God, give him your best. Give him your best. God will help you to quietly serve him. In those secret acts of service, you might think, well, I'm not doing anything.

[15:24] It's those little things that you do that matter still. In Matthew 6 verse 1, the Lord was talking to folk and those Pharisees who wanted to make a show about all that they did.

And he says to his people, he says, Take heed that you do not do your alms before men. In other words, your charitable giving, your good works, your alms before men, to be seen of them. Otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. He says, do those things secretly. I've been blessed by people who have secretly given me things. I know people who have secretly received something that was an encouraging letter, an encouraging note, and they didn't even know who sent it to them.

It was done in secret. But someone got a blessing out of sending it to you. Someone got a blessing out of giving it to you. And you got a blessing out of receiving it. Think about how you can, wow, maybe I could do something secretly to bless someone.

Who I know could do with a blessing. Maybe someone is a bit discouraged. Brad's not discouraged anymore, so don't send one to him. But people are discouraged. And they need uplifting, amen?

[16:36] We all need that from time to time. I was getting pretty discouraged yesterday trying to plug this leak in this roof that I've been trying to fix for 15 years. And you get pretty discouraged and frustrated.

Who's ever had those times? I have lots of times. But we just keep encouraging ourselves in the Lord, don't we? And God will lift you up. He'll help you to get through those down times to get back on your feet again.

And maybe you can be a blessing to someone who needs it this week ahead. Those good works that we do, who do we do them for? An audience of one. An audience of one. We do it for him. For our Lord and Saviour. To bless, to glorify him. As we bless those he wants us to. And God empowers us to do that. Whatever you're called to do, do it.

Do it with all your might. And he'll empower you to accomplish that which he wants you to do. He'll help you to serve him well. Matthew 11, our Lord says, Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[17:32] Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. And you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. We've been learning about that these Wednesday nights, about our Lord and his character traits.

And God's yoke is easy and he's burning his light. Why? Because he holds the heavy end. When a yoke talks about this wooden device around the necks of animals as they plough together, Jesus says, Take my yoke upon you.

Yoke together with me. And he's going to carry that heavy end. He's going to help you to labour with him. So serve God. Another way we can serve God is serve with faithfulness.

Faithfulness. Many times the word faithfulness or faithful occurs in your Bible. Or steadfast.

Tychicus was such a man who was called a faithful minister. A faithful servant.

And as God's servant, God's calling us to be faithful. To work through, to persevere through any discouragement. Through anything that would knock us back or knock us down.

[18:35] To get back up on our feet again. To persevere through anything that the devil throws against us. That faithfulness that God grants us and helps us to go and keep on going.

To keep on keeping on. That stickability that he gives to us. That dependability. That we can be faithful. It doesn't matter about our feelings because we've got faithfulness.

And in faithfulness to God, we can battle through any obstacle. Any barrier we can punch through it and go through. Any opposition we can overcome by God's power. Notice the word faithful.

God's servants are men and women faithful. Full of faith. Full of faith. In the early church when they were looking for people to get some things done. Some practical needs.

They called for some servants. Deacons if you like. And they chose some men. Amongst them Stephen. A man full of faith. And of the Holy Ghost.

[19:35] That's what we need, isn't it? To be faithful. Full of faith. Full of the Holy Ghost. God wants faithful servants. Friends, today we have a noble cause. A noble cause.

You know, Julie and I, we had a time when we were in London one day. And we were walking past near Buckingham Palace. And they said, come inside.

And there's this servant there beckoning us to come inside. Come and have a look around the Queen's Palace. You know, she wasn't home that day. I felt a bit let down by that.

But we were welcomed into Buckingham Palace. And I thought, here are these servants. Imagine that. You know, just to be one of the staff of the Queen, of the King.

A servant of the King. You are! You are a servant of the King. You serve in a greater privileged position than any King's or Queen's servants of this planet.

[20:35] You serve the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And you are His servant today. You are His handmaid. You are His to serve Him. And He's called you to a noble cause.

A noble cause. So be real. Be faithful. Be consistent. And be faithful in the little things too. Matthew 25, we read of how the Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. As you're faithful in the little things, He'll give you more and more responsibility.

As you show yourself faithful in your service to God. As you're a faithful steward of what He's put in your hands, in your care. Let's have that undivided loyalty and that faithfulness in serving.

One thing about servants is that you cannot, as has been said, serve two masters. Make your mind up. Who will be your master?

[21:37] You can't serve God and mammon or in other words anything other than God. It's God or something else. Serve Him. Serve the Lord. Serve the Lord wholeheartedly with gladness, with humility, with excellence, with faithfulness.

Make your life count for God. Another thing is serve with obedience. We've heard that word soon. Serve with obedience. You know, there's a corresponding word with the word servant and it's what? Master. Master, isn't it? The servant of God knows the Lordship of Christ. A man, Sodiata, said this about servant.

One who is deprived of his personal freedom and so becomes fully an instrument in the hands of his master. He is one who can never say no to his master. You know, if the master says to do something and you're a servant, you say, how high do I jump?

You know, that's what you say, isn't it? As a servant, the Lord Jesus is our master. Our master, He is sovereign. Sovereign. In absolute control.

[22:42] And whatever He wants, let's submit to that. Someone put it like this. Our life is not defined by our own wants, our own will, our own desires, our own ambitions, but by His will, His desires and His purposes.

This is the basic truth of Christianity. Jesus is Lord. Lord. And here's how someone else put it. We must learn to be submissive. And if we are submissive, then we are willing to serve.

One of the biggest problems we face today is a submission problem. People refuse to submit to authorities. People refuse to submit to the Lord. People refuse to submit to one another.

And therefore we produce a society full of people looking out for whom they see as number one. Themselves. Isn't it? And it's been said that most Christians actually do want to serve God, as I said before, but unfortunately they want to serve Him as an advisor.

They just want to serve Him in an advisory capacity. Not really doing what He wants. But it doesn't work that way. We've got to do what He wants us to do. What He tells us to do and where He tells us to go.

[23:47] We must listen to Him. And our loving Master tells us that which is a blessing and which is the wisest and best. He's wise. He's gracious. He's generous. He's compassionate. He's kind and forgiving.

He's the Master that you want to have. You know, if you ever work somewhere and you think, I don't want to leave this place. I love my boss too much. I've got a job like that at the moment. I like my boss.

I've had times when I've worked with some people who thought, I'm checking the job notices all the time to try to find the next job. I want to get out of here. Amen. But when you've got a good boss, it makes all the difference, doesn't it?

Yeah. Doesn't it? And you've got a good Master. Amen. He knows the best for you and you never want to leave His employment. You've got it made. You know, it's just out of this world, the pay package.

You know, friends, this Master that we serve, let's submit to Him. Jesus is Lord. And when you're a servant, you know, think of it in the kind of human sense of being a servant.

[24:51] If you're the servant of an earthly king or queen, an earthly master, if you're in a place of servant, being a servant. The Master doesn't ask your opinion about where to serve, about your opinion about when or what you would like to do.

He doesn't ask your opinion about when to move on or how long to stay. He is the Master and we are His servant. He tells us where to go, how long to stay, what to do, when to do it, how to do it and what to do next.

He's given us the instructions right here, hasn't He? And we've got to obey those instructions. And we are free as servants, free to do whatever our Master desires.

But it's a glad service. It's not an irksome thing. He's not a, what's the word, a taskmaster. He's not a slave owner.

He is our Master and we gladly serve Him. We willingly serve Him out of our devotion. And it's a true fulfilment for us to love God, to serve Him. So let's be steadfast in that service.

[25:57] Luke 17, we read of a time where the Lord says, You've done all those things which I've commanded you. And even then, just say we are unprofitable servants. We've just done that which was our duty to do.

You know, there's no claim or credit you can make for what you do for God. When the time comes and we stand before Him and there's that accounting time and we've got to give account of our stewardship, you just say, I'm an unprofitable servant.

I've just done that which was my duty to do. Do what He commands you to do. It's your duty to do it.

And the servant has to do everything his Master tells him to do. There'll be times you want to quit.

There'll be times you don't want, there's people you don't want to deal with, places you don't want to go, things you don't want to do. But we are to do our duty as God's servants. You know, don't always get out of bed and jump out of bed and you want to leap into those responsibilities you have. But you know before God what you have to do. And deep down, hopefully, you've got a heart that wants to do even more. Wants to go even the second mile.

[27:04] The Lord talks about a time where in the world of His day, the soldiers of the day would command a citizen to carry some load. One mile.

Jesus says, go the second. Go the second. And the principle is that we should not just do the minimum, but exceed. Go beyond.

Go above and beyond. It's been said, I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day. People watching you. Be that one that brings honour to God. Wesley said, There's a value to what you do that will have an eternal reward.

And what you do for God now, insignificant though it may seem, there's a value and there's a reward. So there's a reckoning ahead.

Friends, think of this now. What of me now, today? There's no time for idleness. Idleness.

[28:20] You know, sometimes when we idle, we get off track, don't we? You can get rusty. You can rust up. There's a story told about a fancy sports car.

A 1976 Trans Am. Some fancy sports car. And it was sat in the dealership since it was made in 1976. It looked beautiful. You know, they'd have polished it and made it all nice and shiny. And it was beautiful. But looks were deceiving. Because that sports car, even though it had less than 100 miles on it, through the years of idleness, and sitting there just looking pretty, it had done extensive damage to the engine and other components of the vehicle.

It was just rusting away on the inside. And the car failed in what it was designed to do because it was sitting there idle.

And it's not God's will that we be inactive. It's not God's will that we be idle. But He has designed you to serve Him. He's designed you.

[29:32] He's created you to good works. In Ephesians 2.10 it says, His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works that God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

So what's some ways that we can serve? Someone put a bit of a list together which I've kind of adapted. Think about some of these things. Some of these practical things. You might think of lots and lots of other things that you personally can do.

For example, running errands for a friend, baking a cake for a shut-in, opening your home for a missionary, giving some money with a note of encouragement to someone who's struggling, confronting a friend who's strayed from the Lord, giving someone a lift to and from church, hugging your children every day, refusing to repeat gossip, sending flowers to a friend, supporting a new Christian in their walk with God, picking up your undirty clothes at home, getting convicted now, no, I always do that, giving an honestly to bless someone, bringing some food to share after church, helping someone with a home repair, writing a note of encouragement, cleaning up the kitchen so your wife can put her feet up.

I'll have to do that when I get home. Complimenting your boss, keeping a secret you'd really like to share, helping someone move some furniture. I heard of an assistant pastor who helped someone move furniture this last week.

That's doing the humble things, isn't it? That's doing the things that, wow, someone else could do that. You know, let's step down and do some things to be a practical help to people. You might hear of someone who needs some practical help and you can lend a hand with that.

[31:20] Raking up leaves for someone who's a bit less able, helping wash someone's car, baking something extra so you can give something away to someone else and be a blessing, visiting an aged care centre, spending time with people, taking someone through a time of crisis, inviting someone over for a meal, volunteering to serve in the Sunday school, the youth group, whatever, cleaning up a church.

Lots of little things that we can do. The list is limitless, really, isn't it? Let's face it. Whatever we can do, keep on serving. Galatians 6, it says, and let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Do you serve the Lord? I'm sure you do. You are doing it. And you can do more. We can all do more. What is your motivation to serve?

Hudson Taylor, a man of God, a missionary, was interviewing some applicants who wanted to go as missionaries to the field. And on one occasion he met with this group of applicants and he questioned them about their motives, about what motivated them to serve.

And why do you wish to go as a foreign missionary? He asked. And one replied, I want to go because Christ has commanded us to go into all the world.

[32:54] Another said, I want to go because millions are perishing without Christ. Others gave different answers. Then Hudson Taylor said, all of these motives, however good, will fail you in times of testing, trials, tribulations, and possible death.

There is but one motive that will sustain you in trial and testing. Namely, the love of Christ.

The love of Christ. It says, the love of Christ constrains us. We serve because we love Him. We serve even when there is little recognition, little sign, little evidence that you're getting through, maybe.

Little, it seems so easy to dwell on the disappointing things, the discouraging things. Even when we face, we can serve when we face much criticism and we feel that we're getting hurt all the time and our family's getting hurt all the time.

We can go through all that. Even when there is no fanfare and it's just like you're just getting knocked down all the time. Because we do it for the love of Christ, don't we?

[34:15] Because we love our Lord and we love that which He wants us to love, to do that which He wants us to do. And everything counts that you do. You might think, well, I'm a, really a nobody.

No. You've got things that you are doing, secret things, those that are praying, that's important, isn't it? People that are praying for this church, for me, for the folk, people that are giving, no one sees what you put in the offering bag.

Those that are serving in little ways, those that are giving out leaflets faithfully, God sees. Those ones that you're blessing, with those kind words, with those thoughtful things that you do.

The Lord Jesus says, even the little acts of service, even like giving a cup of water in His name, will not go unrewarded. It will be rewarded. You may not see it down here, you may see very little down here, but the reaping time will come.

And so, our service is not in vain. It's got a forever dimension to it. And so, it's the best use of your life. Truly. 1 Corinthians 15, and I'm going a bit overlong here, but therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

[35:41] It's not in vain. There's a value to what you're doing. Serve God in practical ways. Think, pray, seek God.

How can I find other ways to serve? He will show you. He will show you. Serve God in practical service. Look for ways to serve Him and for others for Him.

And, an important point, and it's true, where I work, we've got some people working where I work who, they're in their 70s, I think. It's no retirement age anymore. Did you know that?

I've got people, 70 year olds, where I work. They're still going strong. There is no retirement from Christian service. Isn't that right?

There is no retirement. You know, if you think, oh, I'm going to put my feet up while I've reached a certain age and I'm just going to settle back and just, no.

[36:42] There is no retirement in Christian service. No retirement. In fact, our service is everlasting. Everlasting. Isn't that right, Brother Don? Everlasting.

It says in Revelation 22, talking of heaven, the throne of God and of the Lamb and His servants shall serve Him. We're going to be serving Him then. This is just the trial run really, isn't it?

Just the practice. We're just practicing. So, friends, let's be encouraged this morning to serve God with humility, with gladness, with that obedience, with that love, with that desire to please Him above all things, to excel, to delight to do His will and to find that place which is where you are right now.

It's not, some people think, oh, when I'm a certain age or when I'm more qualified, when I've got more training, when I've got more knowledge, then I'll do something for God. No! The harvest is right now.

Now. Jesus says, now. And we can pray, Lord, make me a servant. Amen.