



SERVE ONE ANOTHER: WEEK 8

This week we will be looking at one of my favorite **One Others**, as well as one of the most difficult and challenging ones to practice, although I think I say that every week. I love the principle of serving and the model of serving we have in Christ, and sometimes I love practicing this one. But obviously you noticed I said “sometimes.” Actually, most of the time I like serving others. But not always. Not if I don’t particularly care for the person, or the “service” isn’t something I enjoy, or if it’s a bit inconvenient and doesn’t quite fit my schedule. Yep, embarrassing to admit. But I think you all can probably relate. Loving others by serving them isn’t always easy. Yet, it’s the supreme example of how to love one another. It involves almost all the other **One Others** in some respect to accomplish this in the Spirit, right? So, before we begin, make sure you’re prayed up and ready to allow the Holy Spirit to move in your heart and give you ears to hear what He wants to whisper to you. Use Galatians 5:13 as your memory verse ... “Serve one another in love.” (Include verse 14 if you want!)

In a previous lesson, I said “The One Others are nothing less than the life of Christ at work in the people of Christ for the glory of Christ.” Because of the truth of this statement, let’s begin by looking at the work of Christ in His people first, and His example of what it means to serve one another in love. Are you ready?

1. Let’s begin by reading John 13:1-17. What feast were they celebrating? In your own words, write a summary of the event, noting specific details that you find significant and meaningful in relation to our topic.

2. The setting was a Passover feast. This feast was very important because it commemorated Israel's deliverance from slavery from Egypt and their escape from God's judgement when He killed all the firstborn in Egypt. Why do you think Jesus chose this day to teach His disciples some very important truths about His own life?

Earlier, Jesus had sent Peter and John into Jerusalem to prepare for the meal (Luke 22:7-12). It's so interesting that the meal would be taking place in a borrowed room, which meant there was no household servant. Washing feet would be the normal job for the slave of the house. In those days, guests were usually welcomed with a foot washing since they had walked through dusty and dirty roads in flimsy footwear, creating very dirty feet. But in this room, there was a basin and a towel. And one big problem. No servant. Jesus took this opportunity to demonstrate not only His love for them but showed them what it looked like to love one another by serving them (13:14). He became the servant (John 13:34).

3. How was Jesus' act of "service" a picture of what He did on the Cross? How do you think this act crossed all culture and social lines?

4. John remembered Jesus' words and His shocking demonstration of love. What did he say in 1 John 3:16-18?

5. With what attitude did Jesus serve His disciples? How is that same attitude seen in His coming to earth, as well as in His death? Also read Philippians 2:7-8, Matthew 20:28, and 2 Corinthians 8:9.

6. So far, what have you learned by looking at Christ's example of service? If Jesus came to serve and not be served ... do you have the same mindset? Is that popular in our culture today?

7. Read 1 John 2:6 and 1 Peter 2:21. What do Peter and John tell us to do?

The word "serve" has an interesting meaning. James Packard wrote, "'Servant' in our English New Testament usually represents the Greek word *doulos* (bond slave). Sometimes it means *diakonos* (deacon or minister); this is strictly accurate, for *doulos* and *diakonos* are synonyms. Both words denote a man who is not at his own disposal but is his master's purchased property. Bought to serve his master's needs, to be at his beck and call every moment, the slave's sole business is to do as he is told. Christian service therefore means, first and foremost, living out a slave's relationship to one's Savior (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)."

"What work does Christ set His servants to do? The way they serve Him, He tells them, is by becoming slaves of their fellow servants and being willing to do literally anything, however costly, irksome, or undignified, in order to help them. This is what love means, as He Himself showed at the Last Supper when He played the slave's part and washed the disciple's feet."

“When the New Testament speaks of ministering to the saints, it means not primarily preaching to them but devoting time, trouble, and giving them all the practical help possible. The essence of Christian service is loyalty to the King expressing itself in care for His servants (Matthew 25:31-46).”

8. Write your thoughts on Packard’s words. Do you see yourself as a slave to others? What does that practically mean?

Now let’s take a look at our memory verse in Galatians 5:13-14. The whole chapter is really about Christian liberties and the freedom we have in Christ. He doesn’t want them to get caught up in legalism again, from which they had been set free, but also to understand that the law of love is what governs Christian living. Our freedom in Christ is not a license to sin, serve ourselves, or just do whatever we want. We are called to love others as Christ loves us. Paul wants to make sure they understand the freedom they now have is not an opportunity for the flesh, but, rather, to live as God’s slave (1 Peter 2:16).

What, then, are we free from? We are free from the guilt of sin because of Christ’s forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7, Romans 8:1), and from sin’s penalty because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (Romans 5:8-10; 6:23). We are free from the power of sin over us (Romans 6:1-23; Hebrews 2:14). The entire Law is fulfilled by keeping the two greatest commandments, loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:34-40). We are now free ... to do what? To serve and minister to one another through love. In 1 Corinthians 9:19, Paul says “Although I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more ...”

9. Read Romans 13:8-10. What light do these verses shed on this topic?

- 10.** We all know that we are called to serve the Lord, right? How is serving others in love a result, or fruit, of that?
- 11.** In the New Living Translation, **1 Peter 4:10** says, “God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.” Have you ever thought about the fact that the gifts God has given you were for the purpose of serving others? They weren’t given to us for ourselves, or to look spiritual, or for any other reason than to serve others and build up the body of Christ. Write your thoughts on that. Think about the spiritual gifts you’ve been given. Or any gift, for that matter. Are you using them to serve others? How?
- 12.** As stated earlier, Jesus said He came to serve, and not be served (Matthew 20:28). Take a look at your own life. Are you living a life of service to the Lord by serving others? If not, what changes can you make? If so, are there still any changes you need to make?
- 13.** Do you ever struggle with serving others only when you want to, feel like it, or it’s convenient? Do you like to serve those who you like, but struggle to serve them if you don’t? How does Jesus’ example in John 13 challenge you?

- 14.** We can serve others, while sometimes forgetting the part about serving them “in love.” Do you think it’s possible to serve others with a wrong heart, attitude, or perspective? Name some examples of ways we can do that.

In Acts 20:19, Paul said to serve with humility. In Joshua 24:14-15, he said to serve Him in sincerity and truth. Peter told the Elders to shepherd and serve the flock willingly and eagerly. I also like Paul’s exhortations to servants in Ephesians 7:5-9, since, after all, we are servants. He tells them to serve wholeheartedly, not as men pleasers, but doing the will of God from the heart.

- 15.** To serve others, we should learn to be attentive to their needs. What are some ways we can do that? Think of serving in the same sense as waiting on tables, as a waitress. What makes a waitress a good one or a bad one? What should be their focus? Ponder that for a bit ...

I read a quote this week that stayed with me. “When we serve one another, it’s not about us; it’s about others ... their needs, desires, and preferences.” How easily we can lose focus and let it become about us, rather than whoever we are serving.

I was a waitress back in college, and I really enjoyed it. Not every moment or every customer, but generally speaking. Of course, you had your favorite customers, that’s just human nature. But your job was to serve whoever was put into your section. They were your peeps. And our job was to pay attention to their needs, watching the table carefully to make sure they had what they needed, when they needed it. Even the obnoxious ones and those non-tippers. (I am a HUGE tipper as a result of being a waitress!) But it wasn’t “supposed” to matter much about my “feelings” for the customer, it was about them. I often think about

this in regard to us being servants of Christ. We are called to serve whoever the Lord “seats in our section” or puts in our booth, no matter what. This thought actually helps me when I don’t “feel” like serving someone in some way. Whether it’s being hospitable, helping out with a practical need, offering assistance, or the zillion ways we can serve someone, we should be prayerfully ready and willing when the Lord directs us. Actually, we should be more than ready and willing, but LOOKING for ways to serve the Lord by serving others!

16. Albert Schweitzer wrote, “There are two classes of people in this world ... the helpers and the non-helpers. I’m a helper.” What about you? Which one do you think you are? If you are a parent, how are you teaching your children to be the “helpers” of the world? Are you modeling it as well as teaching it?

17. How does Matthew 5:13-16 tie in with serving others?

18. Maybe you are truly a servant yet get discouraged at times if you don’t see fruit, or it’s not reciprocated, or you’re simply just tired. How does Hebrews 6:10 encourage you?

19. Read Psalm 100:2. How does the psalmist tell us to serve the Lord? Also, how can and does serving others bring us joy?

20. I have to ask this question. Is there someone in your “booth” that you’ve been neglecting or refusing to make eye contact with? What should you do as a result of this lesson?

- 21.** Spend time this week asking the Lord to examine your heart on the topic of serving one another. Be honest and open with Him and allow Him to be honest and open with you. Listen to His voice!

I read some questions in a book this week where the author challenged the reader to “check themselves” in the area of serving. I thought if I had to check myself, you should too, so take some time and be honest as you go through them. You don’t have to share the answers with your group, just be honest with your evaluation of yourself. Have fun!

In what ways are you loving as Christ loved? In what ways are you being selfish, just as the disciples were at the Last Supper?

1. I want to be served rather than to serve.
2. I want to be first rather than last.
3. I want more than others, rather than less.
4. I want to be honored rather than looking for opportunities to honor others.
5. I want to be the center of attention rather than giving others attention.
6. I want what I want NOW, rather than making sure other’s needs are met first.
7. I am willing to serve others in love even when I am not given public recognition.
8. I’m actually looking for opportunities to be a servant.
9. I am praying for other Christians at least as much as I’m praying for myself.
10. I am willing to become involved in other people’s lives.
11. I am sharing a significant percentage of my money so that the body of Christ can function adequately.
12. I am using my other material possessions to minister to others; in other words, I am practicing hospitality.
13. I have asked God to help me “love my neighbor as myself.”
14. I’m reaching out to establish friendships with non-believers.
15. I am concerned that non-Christians understand the Gospel and become believers.
16. I make an effort to meet new people, both believers and unbelievers.

