

13. Transforming Lives Through Service

In our last five topics, we said that our goal, in developing a church structure, is to develop a structure that will transform the life and thinking of each person. We saw that was the goal of the early church, from the day that it began, in Acts 2. New believers continually began to meet in small groups to begin that life transformation. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 2:41-47, we saw that those small groups focused on at least eight things. Those can be summarized by saying that those small groups were FLOCKS that were praying and praising. FLOCKS stands for:

F - fellowship

L - leadership development

O - outreach

C - caring

K - knowledge

S - service

Today, we will look at the Biblical principles that apply to help transform each person in the group and equip them to grow in their service to Christ and to one another. We will look at the service of each Christian from two different viewpoints. First, every Christian is called to serve Christ. Second, every Christian is called to serve others. It is only as we understand both aspects of service that we will be effective servants for Christ, who carry out His will by serving others.

First, we will look at our service as a relationship to our Master, Christ. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” The word that is translated “serve” here is the Greek word “*douleuo*”. That word comes from the root word “*doulos*” which means *a bonds slave*. Paul often used this word when he described himself as the bonds slave of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:10 says, “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” Paul made it clear that his desire, and goal, was to be a bonds slave of Christ.

In Galatians 5:13, we see that we are to use the liberty that we have in Christ to serve one another as bonds slaves. This really speaks of our relationship to Christ. When we understand that we have the privilege of being bonds slaves of Christ, we realize that we are able to serve one another with the love of Christ. An understanding of our relationship to Christ changes the whole meaning of service. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” The love Christ showed to us, when He died for us, gives us the desire to no longer want to live just to please ourselves.

Service becomes a great privilege when it is based on the love of Christ. We are thankful for the privilege to be able to live for the One who died for us. It is amazing to think that the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords would give us the privilege of being His servants. One of the key ministries of spiritual leaders is to serve others by equipping them to serve the Lord, so that each

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Christian can share in the work of the Lord. That is what gives life real meaning and purpose. Ephesians 4:16 says, “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Life suddenly has a purpose when each person realizes that the Lord can use their life to make an eternal impact in the lives of others.

When we realize that our service is actually serving the Kings of kings and Lord of lords it also changes the way we look at everything that we do. Ephesians 6:6-8 says, “Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.” These verses show us that:

- we do not serve to please people
- we do serve as the bondservants of Christ
- we are able to do the will of God from the heart
- we are able to do service as to the Lord
- we can look forward to reward from the Lord
- we can do this whether we are bondservants or free

Second, we will look at our service as a relationship to our work. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” The Holy Spirit has given each Christian at least one spiritual gift to make it possible to serve Christ and His body, the church. No Christian is left out, because it is the desire of Christ that every person in the body of Christ be equipped to have a ministry to serve Christ.

We also see why Christ gave every single Christian at least one spiritual gift. That gift is given so we can minister to one another in the body of Christ. This reminds us that the gift is not given to us so that we can boast. Instead, it is given so that we can carry out the ministry that the Holy Spirit has uniquely prepared for each Christian. These gifts are given to Christians, so they can be good stewards of the grace of God. A steward is a manager of the affairs of someone else. This means that God gave each of us a gift, because He wanted to give each Christian the opportunity to be entrusted with a part of the work of the Lord. This means that Christ has given every Christian some ministry to carry out in this world and trusts every Christian to carry out that work (service).

The reason Christ can trust us to carry out the work He has given us is due to the fact that we do not have to depend on our own strength to carry out that work. In fact, these verses tell us that God is the One who has supplied the ability for us to carry out that ministry. Before we became Christians, we had various abilities. However, we did not have any spiritual gifts to carry out the work of the Lord. However, at the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit gave us at least one spiritual gift so we would have the ability to do the ministry Christ has for each one of us. That spiritual gift was given by the grace of God so we could carry out the ministry Christ has prepared for each of us as individual Christians.

Some spiritual gifts are speaking gifts. Our verses say that if we have been given a speaking gift, we are to speak the oracles of God. The oracles of God are the very Words of God. A speaking gift is not given so that a person can share his own opinions. A speaking gift is given so that the person can speak the very words of God. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’” Speaking gifts are given to us so that we can speak the thoughts of God, from the Word of God, instead of from our own opinions. That Word is living and powerful and will accomplish what God pleases as we share His Word with others.

Some spiritual gifts are serving gifts. Our verses say that if we have been given a serving gift, we are to serve in the ability God supplies. Here, we see that God is the only One who knows what we can do as we serve, because we do not have to depend on our ability. Instead, we are specifically told to depend on the ability the Lord supplies. His ability is unlimited. That means that He is able to work through our lives to accomplish far more than we could ever imagine. That is why Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” As we yield ourselves to Christ, He is able to do far more than we could ever imagine through our lives.

Since we are to speak the Word of God, if we have been given speaking gifts, and we are to serve in the ability that God gives, if we have been given serving gifts, none of the credit can be taken personally. If we speak or serve in our own strength, we will accomplish nothing for the Lord. However, if we speak His Word, and serve in His strength, Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” We see that the Lord chooses to do far beyond what any Christian could imagine as the Lord works through their lives. That is why we are to help each Christian learn to use their God-given gifts, so that He can do through them all that He chooses. That opportunity to learn to use those spiritual gifts happens best in a small group Bible study where every Christian is given the opportunity for ministry.

God wants to use your life, as an example, to help those in your small group Bible study develop and learn to speak and serve in the strength that God gives. As you give each one in the Bible study the opportunity to learn and share the Word, grow in godly character, and learn to serve in the ability God provides, the Lord will do more in and through their lives than they, or you, could ever imagine. You serve them by giving them an example to follow as they observe your life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help growing Christians learn to speak the Word of God and serve the Lord with the ability He gives.