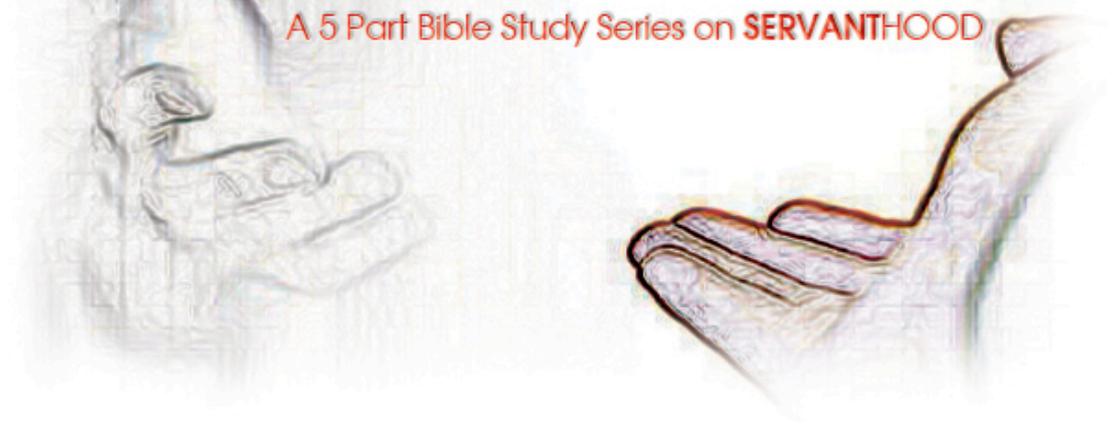


SERVANTHOOD

A 5 Part Bible Study Series on **SERVANTHOOD**



1. Christ the Servant
2. The Christian as a Servant
3. Serving as Leadership
4. Love, humility, gifting.
5. Humbling and servanthood

LEADER'S NOTES

This is a practical Bible Study series. The result of this series should be increased acts of service toward brothers and sisters in Christ, and a willingness to serve *in* the world. The essence of a Christ-changed life is humility. The fruit of humility is *servanthood*.

In this series we will explore how serving: honours God, reflects Jesus Christ, blesses others, matures believers, evangelises and disciples.

We will see that serving costs. It requires humility. It requires sacrifice. It may lead to being misunderstood. It will lead to being unthanked and unappreciated. When we consider the humblest servant of all, Jesus Christ, He was *despised, mocked and rejected*. Serving can be hard.

Christian service is different to mere humanitarian service. The Scriptures teach that God empowers our service- we can serve *in His strength*. Added to this, God places within the Church those who have the spiritual gift *to serve*. By seeking God and His strength, the believer is able to do more than they otherwise could. This then becomes a powerful witness because it causes observers to wonder how it is possible. The answer of course leads to God being glorified. Thus, when a believer refuses to stretch in their serving, they are in part depriving God of glory.

The questions in this Bible Study series are designed to help lead your group in exploring what the Bible actually says about servanthood; why it might be saying this; and how we can apply those Texts which instruct us in our serving. As the leader of the discussion, you should avoid the discussion going too far off track, but be sensitive enough to allow for pleasant interaction which is profitable for the group. You can supplement these questions with additional questions that are "open-ended" (not questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" but questions which commence with: *Who...?, What...?, Where...?, Why...?, When...?, How...?*).

The group should pray before the study for the Lord's enlightenment. Prayer can also be conducted for those within the group either before or after the Study. Based on something someone says in the Study, it may be appropriate to say to that person that they will be prayed for during the prayer time following the Study. It is always a good idea to end the night with hospitality and as leader, ensure that the group does not over-burden its hosts especially by staying too late. Finally, please complete the Report after your group meets so that this feedback can help me to serve you better.

CHRIST **THE** SERVANT

*“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.*

Matthew 12:18

We could have no greater example or hero of a servant than Jesus Christ.

1. What did it take for even Jesus Christ to become a servant? (Philippians 2:5-8)

The above passage shows us that Christ deliberately chose to become a servant. But it cost Him. Later, we will see that servanthood comes at a cost for us too.

2. Note Philippians 2:9-11. How did God the Father respond to Christ’s choice to become a servant?

Later in our series we will also see that the Greatest Servant of all commands His followers, all Christians, to be servants as well.

3. Read Matthew 20:26-28. What was the basis for Christ being able to command that His followers be servants?

4. Based on Mark 10:45, what was Christ’s greatest act of servanthood?

5. *Why* did Christ serve people?

6. How else did Christ serve others?

Serving others on God's behalf is enabled by the gifts and talents God gives His servants. In Christ's case, He potentially had every possible gift and talent with which to serve others. I say potentially, because Christ - without ever ceasing to be God - relinquished His power as God. His ability to serve others was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

7. Read the episode of Christ's service in John 13 from verse 5 to verse 14. Did Christ need the empowering of the Holy Spirit for this act of service?

8. Based on John 13:14, discuss whether Christ's followers need a special word or anointing from God to serve others-

This episode of Christ's service toward His disciples is a powerful illustration of our salvation and sanctification. In order for us to be spiritually clean, Christ must become our Servant and wash us. This is like our salvation. Then Christ must continue to serve us by washing our faces, hands and feet (note Exodus 30:19-21). This is why salvation is an act of God's grace- *God serving us in a way we could not serve ourselves*. As we shall soon see in our later studies on servanthood, serving is an act of grace. Grace is *free* for the recipient, but often *costly* for the giver. When it comes to the salvation of a sinner, the Scriptures reveal what we know intuitively: we cannot save ourselves, we need it done for us. Because of God's great love toward us, He has sent His Servant as our Servant to be our Saviour. God has served to save us. He has shown us *grace* - **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**.

9. How does Acts 3:26 claim that God wants Christ to serve and bless people?

Amen.

Next study: The Christian As A Servant

LEADER'S NOTES

We have established that Christ was a servant, in fact- *the* Servant. As followers of Christ we are to be servants like our master (Matt. 10:25). What we will see is that although the world sees promotion as moving *up*, Christ regarded promotion as moving *down*. John the Baptist once said that his goal was to *decrease* (John 3:30). This is completely counter to the spirit of the world which rewards arrogance, selfish ambition, and manipulated prominence. It is the goal of this study to lead your group into a commitment to serve others in the spirit of Christ. This spirit will affect the way they interact with pre-Christians, but especially with fellow believers (Gal. 6:10). When the local church assembles it is a display what sacrificial service looks like. The church is a servant organisation. But it is more than this. It is a *voluntary* servant organisation. The world can barely comprehend this. This is largely because we live in not just a *professional* world, but a highly *commercial* world where time is money and time is only exchanged for money. Yet in a church, an organised army of committed volunteers, people are not serving for money - even those who are paid (like the pastoral staff) are really paid-*volunteers*. It is not money which causes them to serve. It is their devotion to Christ! In fact, the term "minister" actually means *servant*.

When a business grows, it's managers and owners are usually *promoted*. But when a church grows it's ministers must be *demoted*- that is, they decrease by increasing their servanthood. This reflects what John the Baptist said when Christ, the focus of his prophecies, appeared- "*I must decrease and He must increase.*" (John 3:30)

In this study we will explore why a Christian is a servant, why this requires humility, and why this is difficult for most Christians to maintain.

As the group leader your job is not just to lead your group through this Bible Study, but to also help your group members to get to know each other better with the goal of discovering of how they can serve each other better. Members of your Bible Study Group may be carrying loads, cares or burdens that they have not disclosed. As leader, you can gently reassure your group that because Christ is The Servant, He can serve us at the point of our secret need- whether that need be healing, forgiveness, hope, or reconciliation. As you lead your group in prayer, you set the tone for the Bible Study. As you ask the Study questions and your supplementary questions, your engagement with those in your group (by "active listening" that is, *eye contact, verbal acknowledgement, and affirmation of a person's answer*) will help your group members to have the confidence that they can share issues of their heart and thus have God minister His changing grace to them.

*The **Christian** as a **Servant***

THE CHRISTIAN AS A SERVANT

If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

John 12:26

Imagine your family farm had struggled through drought and famine for one too many years. Your father has borrowed equipment, money and food with the promise that when things turn around, he will repay his creditors. But the harvests never came. Your family has ended up borrowing to pay the interest on the borrowings they have already made. And now the creditors demand that their accounts be settled. In Biblical times there was only one way a situation like this could be resolved. You and your family would be sold as slaves to recoup the creditors' debts. Under Biblical Law, you would have to serve for a minimum period before your debt was considered cancelled. While under servitude you would be required to do *whatever* your master asked, *whenever* your master asked, *however* your master asked - whether you liked it or not.



1. Read what Jesus had to say about being a servant in this context in Luke 17:7-10. How does this show us how Christ wants His followers to serve?

2. In what way is this passage not just about what a servant of Christ should do? In what ways does this teaching from Christ challenge you?

3. Discuss John 15:15 in the light of Christ's followers being His servants. What is Christ saying about the motivation of His followers as servants?

4. How do Christ's beatitudes about Christian service, particularly in Matthew 5:40-41, reveal the type of service Christ is looking for?

5. Why do you think most Christians find it hard to serve in this way?

6. Sometimes we can feel that our service for God and others is not only unappreciated but pointless. In what way does Acts 13:36 reveal why our humanly unappreciated service have a higher purpose?
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7. In Acts 20:18-19, Paul describes how he served the church at Ephesus. Note carefully what he has said. While there is joy and ease in serving within the church community, there can also be other experiences associated with it. What can observe in this passage as Paul's experience and attitude in doing so?
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8. Based on Romans 1:9, how else did Paul say he served the church?
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9. In what way is Romans 12:11 a challenge for how we are to serve the Lord?
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10. According to Romans 14:17-19, what type of service brings God's acceptance and the approval of others?
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Christ's followers are called to serve within the church- to their brothers and sisters with their time, talent and treasure. We are also called by Christ to serve the world as His ambassadors. This is why our jobs hold higher meaning for us.

11. In what ways does First Corinthians 9:19 encourage us that our serving can be fruitful?
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Serving Christ within the Church and the world may require, for some, the traits of Second Corinthians 6:4-10. But above all, as we serve Christ we will need the motive prescribed in Galatians 5:13.

Amen.

Next Study: Serving as Leadership

LEADER'S NOTES

Servant-Leadership is largely about attitude (we'll look more closely at *motive* and *attitude* in our next study) and a preparedness to *work*. In this Bible Study we examine the teaching of Christ about leadership in which Christ established the standard of *servanthood* for His leaders. But it almost sounds contradictory. How can a leader be a servant? In this study we'll see that Servant-leadership involves *considering the needs of others* and while leading them (which involves influencing them, directing them, or reorganizing them) it also involves *looking after them*. Therefore, a servant-leader needs to be *considerate*. And not just of those they are leading.

Consider, Christ was nice, considerate, and helpful to many different people- *not just those He was 'leading'*. This shows us that the true servant-leaders are kind and considerate toward others generally, not just those they lead.

As the leader of this Bible Study group you have a wonderful opportunity to emulate servant-leadership to your group. Pray for them. Encourage them. Talk with them. Allow them to share. During this study you find your study group members may wonder what this has to do with them. Afterall, they may reason, they are not "leaders". But as this study progresses they may come to see 'leadership' differently. Leadership is serving. Put another way, *Leadership is helping others*. In this light, we can (and perhaps *should*) all be leaders to one degree or another.

You might like to invite those who are new to your Bible Study Group to introduce themselves and share where they are at on their spiritual journey. If you have no new members in your group, you might like to discuss with your your group how new members can be introduced and welcomed in. Each week we have new attenders joining our church. The most proven way to see these new attenders commit to our church is for them to be welcomed into a small group.

You could also ask pastoral questions of your group before you commence the study. Questions like, *Before we look at the study tonight, let's go around the group and share something the Lord has impressed upon us from His Word since we last met*. Or, *Before we do the Study tonight, let's go around the group and share something you would like the group to support you in prayer for*.

Finally, I have a message by Ps John Piper which I have burnt for you onto a CD. This is a message on Servanthood and Humility which will help you to prepare for our next Study. Thank you for leading your group and caring for Christ's sheep.

SERVING AS LEADERSHIP

But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,

Mark 10:43

History tells us that whenever Christians have exercised power and authority in society, they have misused it. The result has been a church in decline, general mistrust and cynicism from the public and a loss of pure, genuine evangelistic zeal.

1. In what way is Luke 22:26 about the *attitude* of Christ's followers?

2. How did Christ's statement in Luke 22:27 give Him the right to ask that His leaders become servants?

Christian leaders are to serve those they lead. But this should not be understood as "weak" leadership. Neither should it be thought of as permission to treat 'leaders' disrespectfully.

3. How can a Christian leader best *serve* those they lead?

4. In what ways does Hebrews 13:7 imply ways in which leaders can serve those they lead?

5. Based on Hebrews 13:17 why is it important (to say the least) that leaders serve well?

Nehemiah is a premier example of leadership in Scripture. He served the returned Jews by overseeing the reconstruction program of Jerusalem, particularly the walls. The purpose of this was the welfare and protection of the people of Jerusalem. Nehemiah used his organisational skills and worked day and night to ensure that he best directed everyone's efforts.

6. Christian leadership means serving others *sacrificially*. In what ways did Paul the apostle lead like Nehemiah? (Note 2Cor. 6:4-5; 11:25-29)
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7. Paul warned the Romans against those who claimed to be 'leaders' yet did not lead with a servant heart. Note in Romans 16:17-18 how he said these 'non-servant' "leaders" could be identified-
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Christian leaders serve Christ *by* serving within those within the Church. This is magnificently important for Christian leaders to keep in mind. When leaders think that they are serving others in the Church *for* Christ it can easily cause them to become disgruntled, discouraged or even disillusioned.

8. Although Paul regarded himself as a "super-apostle"(2Cor. 11:5; 12:11), ultimately, how did he think he should be regarded according to First Corinthians 4:1?
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Servant-Leadership involves working with others. Servant-Leaders understand authority (Matt. 8:9). They understand that they are *under* authority, perhaps to another servant-leader, and they understand how to use their authority when leading others. If you are under authority, serving a leader, you serve without "delegating up" (you don't put your responsibility back onto your leader). If you are in authority as a servant-leader you will serve by *following up*.

9. What did Jesus consider to be the basis for "great" leadership? (Matt. 20:25-26)
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10. Why do you think many Christians struggle to exercise 'servant-leadership'? What challenges do Christian servant-leaders face?
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Amen.

Next Study: Love, humility, gifting

LEADER'S NOTES

Another way of saying "servanthood" is to say, *humility*. To be humble is to serve. All believers should strive to be humble. Servanthood is also one of the greatest demonstrations of *love*. A willingness to serve is therefore one of the hallmarks of Christian maturity.

Is there someone in your Bible Study Group who needs assistance? Perhaps your group could practically respond to the teaching in this study by helping someone connected to your small group.

We now live in an age of waning volunteerism. This seems to have resulted in a generation that is reluctant to serve unless there is *something in it for them*. To correct this we need mature examples and patient instruction from the Scriptures. I hope this is indeed what we are doing. Last Sunday our head usher was struggling with moving trestle tables from our auditorium to our Education Centre as several strapping young lads sat and watched. Perhaps one of the signs that we are making headway in discipling our church into glorious servanthood is that scenes like this one become less common.

There are of course those who are *gifted* with servanthood. This study will show that those who are gifted will often be the first to see the needs of others. They will also be the ones most likely to feel unappreciated for their service. But they are also the ones who are most likely to instruct the rest of us who don't serve naturally. I hope we can make the point that there are people who are gifted to serve, who should be honoured, and from whom we have a lot to learn about how to serve.

As group leader, gently observe how those in your small group react or respond to this study. It may be appropriate to ask your group how you can together cultivate the best environment for people feeling that their service is significant. During this time you might pass on an encouraging comment to someone in your group who you have noticed has been faithfully, albeit quietly, serving Christ within the church.

I have given you an audio CD of John Piper's message on *Servant-Leadership as Humility*, I would also like you to listen to a message by John Dickson available from- <http://www.legana.org/studies/servanthood/servanthood-media-files/Winsome-Humility.mp3> .

Love, humility, gifting

LOVE HUMILITY GIFTING

*serving the Lord with all humility and with tears
and with trials that happened to me through the
plots of the Jews;*

Acts 20:19

By now we have seen from Scripture that serving is an essential Christian trait. But there is an even greater reason why believers need to serve. By serving Christians grow because they are developing the most difficult of Christ-like qualities.

1. According to Ephesians 4:2, what are the essential elements to serving within a church among other believers?

2. What is humility so necessary for a church to be strong and healthy?

3. Why is it not possible to apply First Peter 3:8 without serving? (Refer to Colossians 3:12)

4. Why is being humble so difficult?

In a message on *Humility* by Dr John Dickson, he defines 'humility' as *withholding your power for the good of another*. He tells the story of a black guy riding a bus when a few young men get onto the same bus. They decide to target this seemingly vulnerable quiet black guy and call him names and tell him to get out of their seat. Without any fuss, he arises to their audible gasp as they realise they had greatly underestimated his size.

5. What does the Lord promise for those who are humble for His sake? (Matthew 18:4; 23:12; Luke 18:14)

6. Read Philippians 2:3. Based on this verse, what should *humility* look like within a church?

As he walked past them, he handed one of them his business card- *JOE LEWIS Professional Boxer*. Joe Lewis would go on to become the Heavy Weight Boxing Champion of the world shortly after this. John Dickson illustrates his definition of humility with this story. Can you see how it illustrates what humility is? Have you ever had any moments like this?

7. According to Galatians 5:13, what is the essential ingredient necessary for Christ-like service?
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8. Based on Hebrews 6:10, what two particular things does it say that God won't forget or overlook?
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Believers are *servants* because they *love*. If you want to become a stronger believer and enjoy greater blessing, develop your love for others: *serve them* (Mark 12:31; John 15:13).

9. Consider in what ways obeying Colossians 3:12-15 will affect the health of a church. Which part of this passage do you think most believers would find the most challenging?
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Some people find serving very natural. These people shy away from being upfront and in the spotlight. They also see needs before most others.

10. Based on Romans 12:6, why might this be so, and how would someone know if this was for them?
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We all need to learn how to serve. There are opportunities for us to serve within the church and in our worlds. We have opportunities to share the love of Christ through our serving within our homes, our schools, our workplaces, and our clubs. If you really want to learn how to serve well, watch those who are gifted at it. Do you know someone who is gifted with an ability to serve? What is it that they do that you would like to be able to do? May God help us to serve Him as we serve Him and serve His people.

Amen.

LEADERS NOTES

The depth of a believer's Christ-like maturity is commensurate with their Christ-like servanthood. Like Christ, these believers respond to life's interruptions as opportunities to serve someone. In this way, they avoid being so task-driven in their servanthood that they forget that its actually about helping people. If we want to be a stronger, healthier church, we must become a humbler more servant spirited church. And if we commit to becoming this type of believer and this type of church, we can expect that our commitment will be tested.

How do servant-spirited people react to mean-spirited people? In this concluding study on servanthood we are going to explore the choice to serve when it's hard to do so. To choose to respond to difficult situations in a humble way is one of the hallmarks of the mature believer. (This was best exemplified by our Lord when He was being reviled and despised by those He came to save.) We have to make choices to respond humbly to our protagonists by serving those who provoke us. By doing this we are *heaping burning coals* on the heads of our adversaries (Prov. 25:21-22).

To follow Christ in humility, we also need to avoid the opposite spirit of humility: *pride*. It was pride that led to the fall of Satan. It is pride that justifies our lack of service. It is because of pride that someone claiming to be a believer will feel 'above' their brothers and sisters in Christ. Pride divides and ultimately destroys. It's victims are families, marriages, and churches. We want to help people to realise that offences will come and that we are called to respond humbly with a servant-spirit.

HUMBLING AND SERVANTHOOD

To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."

Romans 12:20

"To the contrary..." being a servant is *contrary* to the spirit of this world. At the moment when the apostles thought they were preparing to reign with Christ they began bickering who would be the greatest in Christ's Kingdom. It was at this time that Jesus took a bowl of water and a towel and began to clean the dirty feet of His followers (John 13:3-8).

1. Based on the events of John 13:3-8, why was Jesus so disappointed with His disciples?

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2. In what way is bickering and disunity the sin of pride? (Refer to John 13:3-8, and Ephesians 4:1-2)

Humility is withholding your 'power' for the good of others. Humility beautifies. It makes a person attractive. Do you know someone who is very intelligent but when they are with 'unlearned' people they don't 'speak down' or use their learning to impress those they are with? Such people have learned how to humbly handle their power. In this way a learned person can serve others with their knowledge in *a humble way*.

3. Sometimes we only think of *manual service* as the only legitimate way to serve others. But how else might a servant-spirited believer serve others?

For a church to be strong and healthy it needs everybody serving with their gifts, talents, and abilities. The challenge is for those who are called to intercession to do so without being asked, appointed, or applauded. For those with a pastoral gift their challenge is going to be to encourage the struggling without becoming critical. Those with the gift of giving are going to face the challenge of giving "no-strings attached."

HUMILITY & SERVICE AS A SIGN OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiving is perhaps one of the greatest challenges for the believer. Forgiveness is a *fruit* of, not a *condition* for, salvation.

4. Why is it imperative to forgive those who offend us based on Matthew 6:14?
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5. In what way does Colossians 3:13 require humility of us?
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Is it necessary to trust those you serve? Is it necessary to trust those you forgive? Is it necessary to be willing to serve those who have offended you?

6. Have you ever served someone you didn't like? What affect did your service have?
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There will be times when you are hurt by offence within our church. It will nearly always be unintentional. This doesn't excuse it or justify it, but it should arm us. That is, knowing that people are people both within and outside the church, we should be armed with the spiritual warfare weapons of forgiveness and humility and to be ready to serve that person in love. This is what Christ did. We had deeply offended Him. Yet Christ reached out to us in humble, loving, service.

7. How does Romans 12:19-20 advise us to respond to those who offend or hurt us? Is it possible to obey this without humility?
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May God help us to be a strong, healthy, growing church. To achieve this we need to be servants. For some of you this will come easier because God has gifted you. For the rest of us it will require more effort. To be the kind of servants God calls us to be we need to be humble and forgiving. For our church to continue to grow and to be all that God wants us to be will depend upon our willingness to serve. Please continue to pray for this.

Amen.