

Service 1 - Who We Are More Than What We Do

God is more concerned about who we are than what we do.

Luke 1:74-75 “to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”

- God rescued us from Satan so that we could serve before him all our days. In the original Greek, the words for "serve" and "minister" are different. When referring to God, "serve" implies doing so with holiness, righteousness, reverence, and a devout heart. "Minister," on the other hand, often refers to serving people, emphasizing the role of a servant—seeking to please and edify others.
 - The topic of "service" here focuses on the kind of service that is pleasing to God in His eyes.
1. **Romans 14:17-18** “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.”
- God’s kingdom is a matter of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we need to let God’s righteousness be manifested in us, continually maintaining inner peace, living in harmony with others, and pursuing peace. Additionally, we must embrace the joy of the Holy Spirit. This is how God’s kingdom is revealed through us.
 - For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness
 - If we continually pursue Christ’s righteousness and allow His righteousness to be manifested in our lives, this is serving Christ. We might think this is simply pursuing a spiritual life, but we may not realize that when we live in this state, we are already serving Christ.
 - No one except God is righteous. Righteousness specifically refers to upright and proper actions. Doing God’s will is righteousness. Being kind is also righteousness. In this present age, where society mocks poverty but not immorality, God especially needs His children to manifest His righteousness, and this is what it means to serve Christ.
 - For example, Pastor Grace’s classmate once worked in a government office. Sometimes, when she opened a drawer, there would be a red envelope (a bribe) inside. If she refused to take it, she would offend the entire department, as her refusal could make others fear she might report them.

To uphold God's righteousness in such a situation requires a great cost, but doing so is serving Christ.

- Peace: peace means harmony and tranquility
 - On one hand, we must first learn to make peace with ourselves. Some people struggle to accept themselves—their appearance, height, weight, IQ, level of education, family background, or even their gender. They might detest the fact that they are a woman and want to become a man. But if you can't be at peace with yourself, you won't be able to live in peace with others either. That's why it's so important to accept yourself, recognizing that God sees every person He created as good and beautiful. People who can't accept themselves and can't be at peace with themselves will often struggle to be at peace with other people. Even when others say nothing, a mere glance can hurt them because they interpret it as disdain. This shows just how crucial peace is.
 - On the other hand, in everything we do, the most important thing is to maintain inner peace. Often, we will focus on solving the problem at hand, or we may become nervous right when we are about to start serving. However, if we don't maintain peace, we end up valuing the act of service more than the peace within us, but God has a different view on this matter. He says that His kingdom is about peace—being peaceful. Therefore, you must keep your inner peace. Colossians says that the peace that comes from Christ shall rule in your heart. This peace must govern our hearts at all times.
 - Brothers and Sisters! When something happens, would you choose to be anxious and nervous, or would you rather choose: “Lord, may your peace be with me.” Maintaining the Lord's peace is serving Christ, and it allows God's kingdom to take shape in us continually.
 - In addition to keeping the peace in our hearts, we must also pursue harmony with others. This is why verse 19 says, “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.” This is what it means to serve Christ. Satan's power seeks to create divisions, sow disputes, and amplify differences. However, God wants us to be united. He wants us to seek harmony, to pursue peace, and this is what it means to serve Christ and to let the kingdom of God come upon us. If we are very passionate about our service to God, but we can't get along with someone, then our service would no longer be pleasing to God! The Bible says that in the last days, such service—seeking peace and building others up—is especially pleasing to God and commended by people
- Joy in the Holy Spirit
 - Being joyful is also a way of serving God. Someone once said that when they came to church, the simple, genuine smile of a greeter brightened their day, dispelling the darkness and chaos

they had experienced at work. In this age, how much God desires for His children to bring the joy of the Holy Spirit into their workplaces and homes.

- We must not lose our joy and peace in the process of serving Christ. Is it possible? Yes, some brothers and sisters care so much about the church and worry so deeply about its matters that they lose their peace and joy. Such service is not pleasing to God. We need to be mindful of this!

2. **Isaiah 50:4-6** “The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed...”

- A person who can serve and bless the weary, becoming a source of refreshment and nourishment for others, greatly depends on whether they themselves are teachable and have a listening ear.
- One time, Minister Pearl Young told Pastor Hans Waldvogel that a certain young man was going to start serving the Lord. Pastor Waldvogel didn't even ask if this young man knew the Bible well or if he had any gifts, he simply asked, "Can you tell him anything?" Does the young man have an ear that listens, can people tell him anything, can he accept feedback?
- If we don't have an ear that listens, what we say won't be heard by others either; and if a parent doesn't have an ear that listens to God, or an ear that listens to his or her pastor, you'll find that his or her children won't have an ear that listens either. This is the way God works.
- What did Isaiah say? He said, "The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away." What does it mean to have an ear that listens? It means that you listen and do what you are told, no matter how hard it might be.
- **Verse 6:** “I offered my back to those who beat me...I did not hide my face.” This refers to a person who serves the Lord. Sometimes when you receive a message from God, it might be a very unpopular message, and whether you speak it to the public or to a certain person, it is very likely that the other person will be very angry, such that they might want to pull out your beard, beat you up, verbally abuse you, and spit on you; but we need to be absolutely obedient in this case and not step back or back down. We can ask ourselves if we are the kind of people who are afraid of offending people and are trying to please others at every turn. If you are like this, you will not be able to be a true servant of God, because God sometimes wants us to deliver a message that will offend others.

3. **Acts 6:3** “...who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom...”

- **Good reputation:** What are the criteria for choosing seven people to manage the distribution of food? The first criterion is to have a good reputation. You might think the most important criterion is to be a good cook, to be quick in action, and adept at cutting vegetables. After all, there are so many people to be served! What does having a good reputation have to do with cooking? Can you feed people with a good reputation? What's the use of having a good reputation but being slow at cooking? What's the use of having a good reputation if you're a bad cook? However, God says that the first thing we need is a good reputation, and in all ministries, God cares more about who we are, which is to say that even if you are great at cooking, not having a good reputation might turn people away! People might think they don't want such a person to serve in the church.
 - Sometimes, we may have a more carefree personality and don't care what others think of us. When people tell us, "You're too careless," or "You're too rude," we might respond, "I don't care!" But that attitude is wrong. Having a good reputation means you must care about these things. The Bible says that the children of God are like a bright light shining forth to show the word of life, and the word of life is not just something that you preach with your mouth all the time, but it is something that you have to demonstrate through your actions.
 - Do you have a good reputation at your workplace and at home? The Bible says that to choose someone to serve in God's family, the person must first have a good reputation. If a family member or a roommate tells us, "You need to change this, this is not good," we must pay attention to what they're saying. We must pay attention and not dismiss their words because we don't care about how others see us. It's not because we should care about our image, but because God would like us to demonstrate the path of life. At home, we should be blameless except for our faith.
- **Full of the Spirit:** Being filled with the Holy Spirit is an adjective, not a one-time experience. It refers to someone who is consistently filled with the Holy Spirit—a person full of the Spirit. From such a person, we often see the Holy Spirit's guidance and work, rather than someone who acts or speaks recklessly, doing whatever they please.
- **Full of wisdom:** All service in God's house requires abundant wisdom and good management skills. For instance, how can you cook for thousands of people without wasting food, cooking too much and leaving leftovers, or cooking too little? How can you ensure you're not mismanaging God's money? Some people will bargain when spending their own money, but when it comes to purchasing for the church, they don't bother negotiating—after all, it's the church's money, not theirs. This kind of carelessness is unacceptable. We must be wise and diligent in managing the resources of God's house.

- Brothers and sisters, in all our service, if we have a willing heart, even if our minds are not sharp, we can ask the Lord for wisdom. As God says, anyone who lacks wisdom can ask Him. What God cares about is our willingness to serve Him. All service in God's house requires thoughtfulness—it's not just about doing the work but striving to do it to the best of our ability in every aspect.

4. God is more concerned about who we are than what we do.

- An ancient apostle once said, "God is more concerned about who we are than what we do." God is more interested in who we are than what we do for Him. This is something we should always keep in mind and not just focus on the fact that we want to serve passionately; rather, we should also pay attention to what's going on inside us. Is there righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit? Do I have the ear of a teachable person, the tongue of a teachable person? Do I have a good reputation?

“True work is the outpouring of life.” The amount of life that flows out from us is what God considers true work. “Work that counts always comes from the outflow of Christ's life.” How much of Christ is lived out through us determines the value of our service. “Offering ourselves to God is not about working for Him, but allowing Him to work in us. Anyone who does not allow God to work in them cannot truly work for Him.”

- Ephesians 2:10 “For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”
 - We need to understand deeply that we are His workmanship, His masterpiece. He created us, but He continues to work in us, shaping us into His image. We often proclaim, "Lord, I would like to dedicate myself to You. I want to serve You." But the most important thing in offering ourselves to God is not to work for Him, but to let Him work in us.
 - “If we do not allow God to work in us, we can't work for God.” What does it mean to let God do His work? Does it mean that when a task occurs, we should rush in and get it done? Or does it mean we should wait quietly for the Lord, draw near to Him, receive His presence, and then ask the Lord to be with us while we complete the task? The latter is letting God do His work. Often, as we wait upon God and draw near to Him, His presence operates within us, and He continues His work in us. That is why we must allow Him to work.
 - Oftentimes God will work in us through our parents, our significant others, and our children, and the work He does is very thorough and direct. If we keep running away, “Ugh! I'm sick of this house, I'll move to a dorm and live by myself,” then we are not allowing God to work in us. God has called everyone to be a servant of God, so we must pay attention to every circumstance that God has given us and let Him work in us. You must learn to listen to your parents, brothers, and sisters at home when they point out

your mistakes; you must listen to your co-workers, brothers, and sisters at church when they provide constructive feedback and loving advice; To accept and listen is to let God do His work.

5. **Psalm 90:17** “May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us...”

- First, let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, then let Him establish the work of our hands upon us.
- God’s favor refers to His righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—all the things we just talked about. It is only after God’s favor is upon us that He can establish the work of our hands for us.

6. **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**

- Paul was a very wise man. He was a disciple of Gamaliel and received the best education. Yet he said, “I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.” He did not proclaim, “I am capable. I met our Lord on my way to Damascus and saw a great light. I was blind for a few days and then filled with the Holy Spirit.” Paul had experienced many miracles. In the past, he was a persecutor of Christians, but then he became a servant of God. He knew the scripture so well he could’ve used this knowledge to confirm Jesus’s identity as Christ and then boast about it, couldn’t he? Instead, Paul said, “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” He said, “I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.” How important it is for a servant of God to have Paul’s humble attitude.
- When we serve God, we should feel scared and incompetent. Lord! It is better for you to use others than to use me—this will help us rely on the Lord with fear and trembling. Whenever we think we know how to do something, or that we are familiar with the task, then we have already failed, because we are already relying on our own ability and wisdom instead of the power of God. Why does God say in the Bible that He has chosen the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and the weak of the world to shame the strong, and the lowly of the world, the detested of the world, the dispossessed, to abolish the things that are? It is as if God has a special dislike for the rich, the strong, and the wise, isn't it? What's wrong with that? God said that no flesh and blood should boast before Him, and God wants us to serve Him humbly forever so that no one can boast before Him.

7. **Matthew 7:21-23** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven...”

- This is why we need to spend a couple of special sessions focusing on service, lest one day we go to heaven thinking that we have served so much in the name of the Lord and that our service has been very fruitful, only for the Lord to say, “Depart from me, you evildoers!” We need to see from God's perspective the kind of service that is pleasing to Him.
- Verse 19 says, “Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” Those who preach the gospel, cast out demons, and perform miracles in the Lord’s name surely are fruitful in their service, right? Performing miracles surely counts. Why yes, there are some fruits, but the scripture also says that we can recognize them by their fruit. God wants us to know that your fruit does not depend on the effectiveness of your service; it is very dangerous to base judgments of right and wrong on the effectiveness of one’s service or whether one can do it.
- Throughout the ages, we have seen many people who were powerful and effective in what they did, but they were not pleasing to God, nor was their service pleasing to God or approved by others. There may be some who received approval because those who are powerful and effective tend to be approved by men, but they were not pleasing to God. Let this be a lesson to us! The Lord says that only those who do the will of His Father in heaven will enter it, and He cares about who we are: am I a teachable person? Do I have His word often? Do I do what He pleases as soon as I know what He pleases? Am I a person who obeys His will? This is the kind of service that is pleasing to God.

8. Conclusion: God is more concerned about who we are than what we do. Let us seek that which is true, and what is true is what God desires. Let us encourage one another to do so, so that our service may be pleasing to God and approved of men; so that our service may be a service that brings the kingdom of God to life.

Service 1 Questions

1. What is “righteousness”?
2. We must first be at peace with ourselves, but some may struggle to accept themselves. Do you accept yourself?
3. Do you worry so much about the church or your service that you lose your peace and joy?
4. Minister Pearl Young told Pastor Hans Waldvogel that a certain young man was going to start serving the Lord. Pastor Wu didn't even ask if this young man knew the Bible well or if he had any gifts. He only asked one thing. What did he ask?
5. Ask your co-workers if they're comfortable giving your feedback.
6. What does it mean to have an ear that listens?
7. Are you afraid to say what should be said? Are you scared of offending others?
8. When you buy things for the church, are you more casual about it?
9. Are you a person who can serve, bless the weary, and be a source of nourishment and supply for others? If not, what do you think is the reason?
10. If we don't allow God to work in us, we can't work for God. What does it mean to let God do His work? Do you have opportunities to let God work in you? Or do you just want to work for God all the time?
11. Has God worked in you through your surroundings, relationships, and other things or objects?
12. Have you ever failed at something because you were confident you could do it? Or have you ever done something remarkably well because you felt you couldn't do it, but humbly relied on God instead?
13. Memorize: Romans 14:17-18, Isaiah 50:4-6.