

## Discipling Grace-filled Servants

### Prayer

Lord, You came to earth not to be served but to serve. Let Your purpose be ours as well and help us to be faithful in our service to others. Grant us loving and giving hearts that we may share Your love within us with others. Help us become the disciples You want us to be. Amen.

**Theme verse:** *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10).*

### Being a Disciple

In the Gospels, we read about Jesus calling His disciples to follow Him. These 12 disciples gave up everything to follow Jesus. During His life on earth, Jesus lived a perfect life as He loved, healed, and forgave people. He also trained and guided the disciples to follow His lead. A disciple is ready to follow, to listen, to learn, to witness, to serve, and to give. Today, we don't have Jesus with us in the flesh, but He speaks to us through His Word. As disciples, we receive guidance and power from reading and studying His Word and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We are called "to be" disciples and "to do" acts that bear fruit as disciples. What we say and do will show others that we are disciples. An important part of being a disciple is to serve.



### Loving and Serving

Jesus said, *"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve"* (Matthew 20:28). Though He was/is God, Jesus put aside the rights of God to become a common man, to become a servant (Philippians 2:6-7). He asks us to set aside our "rights" and to live a life of servanthood as He did. The writer of Hebrews tells us that we are called and enabled to do just that. *"...the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, [purifies] our conscience from dead works to serve the living God"* (Hebrews 9:14). We serve God by serving others.

When we, in Jesus' name, give drinks, in response to this love for us, to those who are thirsty, clothe those who need clothes, or minister to those who are sick, we are living as servants. Jesus calls us to serve people in our families, at work, in our neighborhoods, and even throughout the world. We live the lifestyle of grace-filled stewards as we use opportunities to serve. As the Holy Spirit enlightens our hearts and minds through the hearing of the Word and participation in the Sacraments, He changes us into servants who willingly serve Him by serving others. Jesus said, *"By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:35).

1. What are some acts of service Jesus did on earth?
2. Read Matthew 25:31-46. What was Jesus' criteria as He separated the sheep from the goats? Does this mean we are saved, then, because of good works? If not, then how we interpret Jesus' words in this passage?

3. Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. What acts of service did the Good Samaritan provide? What made his service especially noteworthy? (See also Luke 17:11-19 and John 4:7-26).
4. Read Acts 16:11-15. What did Lydia do that made her a model for hospitality, sharing, and serving? What prompted Lydia to offer her home to the evangelists (see verses 13-14 especially)?

## Serving Wholeheartedly

*"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but...to walk in all His ways...to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul..."* (Deuteronomy 10:12). Heartfelt service to the Lord is an integral part of our stewardship. Paul exhorts us to render "service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man" (Ephesians 6:7).

As our Chief Steward, Jesus is a perfect model of service to emulate. Just prior to His death on the cross, Jesus gathered His disciples for the Last Supper. When the disciples were gathered around the table, "[Jesus] rose from supper. He laid aside His outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around His waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around Him" (John 13:4-5). After Jesus finished washing the disciples' feet, He said, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:12-15).



Jesus' directive couldn't be much clearer. We know He was talking not just to the disciples but to us, nor was He speaking of serving exclusively by washing feet. What Jesus did will always be our example and our encouragement to serve others. Regardless of who we are or what we've accomplished, God calls us to serve. Satan will try to deceive us by telling us that we're too busy or too important, but that should never be the case. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples" (John 15:8). The instruction is clear that we are to render service and not sit in idleness.

It is love that motivates us to be servants rather than people who want to be served. Our desire to love and serve our neighbors is our response to the Lord's love for us. We love because He loved us first (1 John 4:19). To love is to serve; service is the natural outcome of love. Love is what gives us the energy and desire to serve. When our hearts are filled with love and gratitude for who God is and what He's done for us, we serve with joy. Awed and grateful, we are compelled to share His love by living as servants. As we live as Jesus' disciples, our eyes and hearts are opened so that we are made aware of the needs of others.

Jesus calls us into servanthood not just because others need our service but because of what He does in us through our serving. By living as servants, we often gain more than those receiving our service. One of the blessings of serving is that it helps us control our self-interests by putting others first. Richard Foster wrote, "Nothing disciplines the inordinate desires of the flesh like service, and nothing transforms the desires of the flesh like serving in hiddenness. The flesh whines against service but screams against hidden service. It strains and pulls for honor and recognition." As God's stewards, we are to serve all people, not just those who can bring us status or return the favor. Helping others minimizes the problem of self-absorption or pride that interferes with our living as servants. When we do mundane, unnoticed acts of service for others, we receive the reward of knowing that it is really Christ we are serving (Colossians 3:23-24).

In order to be faithful in our serving, we must be available. We may at times need to have our agendas interrupted for service opportunities. Our service opportunities are not limited to helping our friends only but even our enemies. True service is not limited to the deserving. If service were just for the deserving, why would Christ have died for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8)? In order to remind ourselves to remain available to serve, we may want to pray this prayer each morning: "Lord Jesus, as it would please You, bring me someone today whom I can serve."

5. Why did Jesus use foot-washing as His model of servanthood for His disciples?
6. How can you become a person who willingly serves others? (1 Corinthians 2:16b; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:13, 4:13).
7. How can serving bless the server?
8. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul tell us that we are saved by \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 10).
9. This study is titled "Discipling Grace-filled Servants. Why is grace so important?"
10. What does 1 Peter 4:10 say about your need to be in service? Identify its three parts.
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
11. How does Mark 12:30-31 motivate you to serve?
12. How would you contrast true service with self-serving service?
13. In which service activities are you currently involved? What service is God prompting you to do? Is there someone you know who God wants you to serve regularly and consistently?



## Prayer

Lord, help us to be humble, compassionate, and available as we practice living as grace-filled servants. Help us to use our time, talents, and treasures to extend Your kingdom and to serve those in need. Use us as Your instruments of love, mercy, and grace. In Your precious name we pray. Amen.