

CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART

Below we've listed six things we can do to cultivate a servant's heart. Read through each of these as a group and discuss why each one is important, and what happens when we fail to include all of these in our pursuit of becoming a servant people.

1. **Be Honest with God.** Confess that you are as far from the servant he desires you to be as you possibly could be.
2. **Take Jesus at His Word.** Believe Jesus when he says that we will receive a far greater blessing from serving others for his sake than we will in pursuing our own self interest.
3. **Ask for help.** Ask Jesus to create a genuine desire in you to serve others.
4. **Stay Close to Christ.** Avail yourself of the ordinary means of grace (word, prayer, confession of sin, fellowship with other believers and obedience) in order that Christ may continually form his heart and character in you.
5. **Follow Christ in Simple Obedience.** Avail yourselves of the opportunities right in front of you to serve others for the sake of Christ and the gospel.
6. **Be Careful Not to Make Serving an Idol.** The things of God can just as easily become idols as the things of this world. When we take things like worship, prayer, bible study, reading theology, doing ministry or serving and make them ultimate things, they will undo us as surely as career, image or possessions. The moment we get our identity from being a servant rather than from Jesus, serving becomes a form of works righteousness rather than a genuine response to the grace we find in Christ.



360 DISCUSSION 11.13.16

THE HEART OF A SERVANT



Whether we like it or not we are all servants. It is in our nature to give ourselves away, and the things we give ourselves to will ultimately possess us. So the real question is not who or what or you serving, but what is what you are serving doing to you. Even the noble things in life, like family, career or church can be harsh task masters. It is only in serving Jesus that we find ultimate rest and joy.

But Scripture takes us one step further. As servants of Jesus we are called to be servants of others for Jesus sake. The church is called to be a serving people in a selfish world.

In John 13:1-17, Jesus not only serves those closest to him, he calls them to follow his example and give themselves to a life of serving others for the sake of the gospel.

THE CONSUMMATE SERVANT (vv. 1-5)

The book of Isaiah offers two almost competing portraits of the coming Messiah. He is portrayed as a powerful king who is able to deliver his people and restore their joy, and he is portrayed as a suffering servant who is broken and abused for the sake of his people. John brings these two portraits together in vv. 1-5.

VERSES 1-5 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

1. In what ways is Jesus portrayed as the powerful king?
2. In what ways is he portrayed as the lowly servant?
3. Why is washing the dirty feet of the disciples a particularly powerful portrait of what it means to be a servant?
4. What are some of the more difficult ways we are called to serve those around us?

POINTING TO SOMETHING FAR GREATER (vv. 6-11)

While we do not serve in order to get to the gospel, we always serve for the sake of the gospel. In serving others we always direct their attention to the far greater servant, and how he has already served them in the biggest way imaginable.

VERSES 6-11 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."^d

⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹ "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

¹⁰ Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

1. How does the simple act of washing the disciples feet point to the far greater act of service that Jesus would soon perform on their behalf?
2. How does foot washing portray what Christ has done for us to bring us into fellowship with God?
3. How does foot washing portray what Christ does to keep us in fellowship with God?
4. What are some ways our serving points back to Jesus?

THE SOURCE OF ULTIMATE JOY (vv. 12-15)

Jesus not only tells us that we should follow his example and that no task should be beneath us, he tells us that we will find our ultimate joy in serving others for his sake rather than pursuing our own needs and interest.

VERSES 12-17 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

1. According to this passage, why should we serve others?
2. How does our refusal to serve others demean the character of Christ?
3. What do you think it means to be blessed?
4. How does serving others bring God's blessing into our lives?