

## Serve One Another Galatians 5:13

today. It's found in **Galatians 5:13** where I invite you to turn.

A budding artist once painted a picture of the Last Supper. After it was all done he took it to the writer, Leo Tolstoy, for his opinion. Carefully and understandingly, the Russian master of words studied the canvas. Pointing to the central figure he declared, "You do not love Him."

As we consider today that we are to serve one another and do so in love, I think it bids us to ask the question of whether or not our service to one another is done out of love, because I believe that if love is the motivation or the foundation for our service then we will do our best.

"Why, that is the Lord Jesus Christ," exclaimed the artist.

Let's understand first and foremost that in order to serve others, we must first remember that we serve the Lord. If we remember in our service that it is the Lord we actually serve then I would think we'll give it our all. Nothing less than our best should be the effort by which we serve others, if we love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. So let's look at serving our King and then we'll look at serving our kin.

"I know," insisted Tolstoy, "But you do not love Him. If you loved Him more, you would paint Him better."

Gene Getz writes: "Few of us are budding artists in this sense, but the Bible teaches we're all to be servants – servants of the Lord Jesus Christ and of one another. With this in mind, we can easily reword Tolstoy's statement to read, 'If you loved Him more, you would serve Him better.' Furthermore, 'If we loved one another more, we would serve one another better.'"

### I. SERVING OUR KING

It seems like one question adults enjoy asking children is this: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Let that roll around the noodle for a bit. Let it permeate you thoughts for a while.

Answers are typical, some imaginative, few are comical, all have an element of hope and desire. At the time they seem so definitive. Few have the vision to see beyond age 4 or 5 and actually make a career of their childhood dreams. You have heard them. Most will change their minds by the time they reach adulthood. How many of you knew what you wanted to be when you grew up?

David is a good student. It was his goal to get all A's on his report card. At the end of the year we were waiting on one grade that was on the fence. But in the end he made all A's all year. Now there were times when we would get tests or papers back and we would go over them with him and we would ask a very simple question. Is this your best? Could you do better?

A dentist  
A doctor  
A scientist  
A pro athlete  
A nurse  
A movie star  
A fireman  
A policeman  
An astronaut  
A chef

That's what Tolstoy is asking us to consider in our serving the Lord and serving one another. Is what we do for Him or for others our best? Or is there a mediocrity to our service?

I think that question is assumed in our passage

A mischief maker (okay, I threw that one in there to see if you were paying attention)

Their responses are as varied as they are. One child said he wanted to either be a mechanic or a garbage collector. When asked why he chose those occupations, his response was something you might expect from a boy – “so I can get dirty.”

Schools have career day and some even give aptitude assessments to help a student pick a career he or she would do well at.

For a moment though let’s turn the question on its side. Suppose Jesus was standing here and we were to ask Him what He wanted us to be when we grow up. What would Jesus want us to become? Our mind spins considering all the possible jobs available in the work world today and we can’t imagine what job Jesus would choose for us. When I reflect on what Scripture says, the answer I’m certain would surprise us all. It’s also likely that His answer would be the same every time and for every one of us. I suspect that what He would say would catch us off guard, it would be something we would never guess if we had a thousand guesses. I imagine Him saying that He wants us to be different...He wants us to be a servant.

If I were a betting man, my guess is no one has ever told you when asked the question of what they wanted to be when they grew up that a servant was even on the radar screen of options. That seems so degrading, well beneath our dignity and yet there we have it in black and white – SERVE ONE ANOTHER. Let me add to that what we are told in **Psalm 100:2** – “**serve the Lord with gladness.**”

The NIV reads to “worship the Lord with gladness.” We might think they are two distinct words with very different meanings. But in reality the idea is the same. Our service is to be an act of worship. When was the last time you put to the two together?

**Romans 12:1** suggests the same. “**Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.**” (NIV)

The KJV reads “**that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.**”

The correlation between being a living sacrifice and serving is this: we give our all. In reality, our service, if done with God in mind, is an act of worship.

Now as we think about what it is to serve the Lord and to serve one another we need to understand something that isn’t overly evident in our English translations. As a matter of fact, each translation softens this word when it comes to the act of serving.

If you read different translations you would be surprised to find that they use a term that limits the scope or intent of the original Greek word. The Greek word used in the original is a word that really means slave and translators have opted to use the word serve or servant. In the original text it’s used 130 times. Only when the word is used in the context of a position is the word translated slave, otherwise it uses serve. For example, in **Ephesians 6:5** it says that slaves are to obey their master.

In the Greek there are at least six words for servant and slave is not one of them. The one we see the most is the word *diakonos* a word that is translated deacon. It’s used in **Acts 6:2** to describe the activity of serving tables. **I Timothy 3:8** uses it to describe the office of deacon. The word speaks of caring for the material needs of others, attending to their interests. It also is a voluntary position or activity.

Another root word is *oiketes* and refers to a house

servant and has to do with someone who instructs the young.

Then there is *huperetes* which is a low-level slave, literally an under-rower, a galley slave, someone who pulled an oar down under a ship. Other words refer to service in a religion and to minister.

These words fall short to what is used by Paul in our text. It is the Greek word *doulos* and is a very strong word. Sometimes in English it is translated bondservant which is a word that comes closest to the intent of the original. It is the word slave.

We find it in **Matthew 25:21** where we have the parable of the talents. In that parable, a man is going on a long journey. He'll be gone for a while and he has entrusted his servants with the responsibility of managing his affairs while he is away. Before he left he gave one 5 talents, to another he gave 2 talents, and to another he gave 1 talent. When he returned they each reported what they had done with the talents. His response to the actions of the first two was to tell them **“well done good and faith...servant.”**

The NAS correctly translates it as slave.

When Paul spoke to his audience of the responsibility to be a *doulos*, a slave to one another, they completely understood what he meant. In the Greco-Roman empire approximately 50% of the population were slaves. That word today is distasteful and carries with it a very negative connotation, whether it's in reference to our own history or to the slave trading that still goes on today around the world.

So because of that negative connotation we don't like to use that word, so it gets softened up, which in so doing losing the intent and impact of its true meaning. But when we consider what that word means in reference to how we are supposed to serve the Lord and one another, we must define it as intended otherwise we miss the mark on what it

means to serve.

The Greek word for slave used by Paul describes someone who is totally subjected to the will of another, the will of the owner and is in total or complete dependence on that owner.

Paul writes in **I Corinthians 6:19-20** that we are not our own, we were bought with a price, that price was the blood of Christ. We are his slaves then and are to do His will, putting aside our own.

Paul says we are to be slaves, not servants. A servant was hired and worked for wages, and if they wanted to, they could quit. Slaves were owned and couldn't quit. When Paul opens his letters and refers to himself as a servant of Christ, he's actually saying that he was a slave of Christ. He was totally committed to serving the Lord. In **Galatians 1:10** he writes that if he were trying to please men, he would not be a slave of Christ. Another way to say it then is that he only did what pleased his master.

That should be our singular focus. **So when you think about it from that perspective, is my singular focus to serve Christ in everything I do?** Let me come back to what I said earlier. We cannot serve one another if we are not serving the Lord first. And let me add again, serving the Lord with gladness.

**Is there joy when you serve the Lord, or do you object or complain? Would you rather be doing something else? Is your heart in it?**

Every Monday morning after the buses rolled out the Camp gates the counselors had chores to do to get ready for the new batch of campers coming in that night. Guess who got the toilets in the boys' bathhouse? I'd like to think that there was rejoicing around the porcelain throne, but I'm not going to kid myself. I'm sure there were times when I would have rather been assigned an easier or better job, something that had more visibility.

Often times our service to the King is in places of obscurity in tasks that aren't at all pleasant. Sometimes we'll enthusiastically sign up to serve the Lord and then when the day or time comes we give a little grunt of objection or reluctance. We'd rather be somewhere else or do something else and we secretly hope the rapture occurs or that at least the thing we signed up to do is cancelled. **How often do I view it as my cross to bear?** Let's keep in mind that we serve the Lord and that in doing so we must serve the Lord with gladness.

Before we serve our kin, we must remember that we serve first and foremost the King. **What is our service to Him like? Would He respond with a well done good and faithful slave?** When we remember that we serve the Lord in everything we do there should follow a prevailing joy that comes in our serving others.

## II. SERVING OUR KIN

Let's call to mind once again the words of Tolsoy to the young artist that if we loved Christ more we would paint Him better. If we loved Christ more we would serve Him and others better. And maybe that's the heart of the matter isn't it? How much do we really love Christ? Perhaps it is that if we loved Him more, we would be willing to sacrifice whatever necessary to serve Him, we would willingly sacrifice to serve others.

In the context of our verse in **Galatians 5:13**, we see a striking contrast. The contrast is this: serving ourselves or serving others. Loving ourselves or loving others. If we are all about exercising our freedoms in Christ to the exclusion of others, then we are seeking our own fulfillment. But if we are concerned about serving others, putting their needs before our own, then we are exercising love toward them.

This is beautifully seen in the example of Christ.

**Philippians 2:5-8**

Here we see the self-sacrificing love and humility that Christ had for others, that He would give up the splendor of heaven and forego any entitlements He would otherwise be entitled to in order to become a slave.

**John 13:1-17**

Are we willing to wash dirty feet, even the feet of those who would betray or deny Him.  
Being a servant isn't for self-gratification.  
It isn't for notoriety.  
It isn't for prominence.  
It isn't to earn merit with God and others.  
The Lord says simply that if we do them we will be blessed or happy if we do them.

Such an attitude of service to others is only developed through the divine nature of God's Spirit living in us and working through us. When His Spirit begins to rule our hearts and transforms our character then serving others in love will set us free from self-indulgence. Love then becomes the guarding and guiding factor in all that we do as we look for and discover ways we can serve the Lord and others. Otherwise without love we will become selfish and self-centered. We clamor instead that others should serve us. But that's not the way it is meant to be or should be.

**I Corinthians 12:4-7**

Each one of us has been given a spiritual gift in order that through its use, we might serve others with it in the body.  
We are to serve one another with gladness. Let there be a joy to what you do. Regardless of who it is we are serving our joy should be the same. Otherwise aren't we showing favoritism?

We are to serve one another with our whole heart. The 10 commandments have been truncated, boiled down to two. The first command is to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And if we really, truly do that then the second should be a breeze – to love our neighbors as ourselves. If we

love the Lord and we love our neighbor as we should we will serve them with our whole heart. That means we'll put everything we have into it.

Last year during the auction for David's school, Robyn bid on and won a full day of yard work performed by the Junior class boys. Robyn had 14 boys and two adults painting the barn, clearing brush, spreading manure, sealing the garage roof, stripping siding off a small shed. It was hard work. A couple of the boys thought it was going to be a picnic and left after only a couple hours. One of the other teens apologized for them, that they hadn't given their all.

**When you serve, regardless of what it is, how's your heart? Do you give it your all or is your heart divided?**

We are to serve one another with humility. Chuck Swindoll asks a very probing question. Are you willing to serve in obscurity? I take that to mean serving with humility, a willingness to do something without recognition. Using the account of Moses as illustration, he takes us on a journey to Egypt. Adopted into the royal line, he was a prince. He had the best of everything at his fingertips, served by others who were at his every whim. But he left that and journeyed to Midian where he met and married a woman. Scripture says that he was willing to dwell with the man (her father). It was there that he spent the next 40 years tending sheep out in the hot plains and hills of Midian – serving in obscurity.

Are you willing to serve in obscurity? Swindoll says **"A servant's mindset will teach you what that attitude is all about."** It goes back to the spiritual gifts. Not all are in the eye of the public – many serve in the background, remaining unseen, but all who serve should do so in humility.

We are to serve one another with readiness. When a need arises there should be a willingness to step in

and help out. **Are you willing to put aside your own agenda for a time to serve someone else?**

We are to serve one another with eagerness. You look for opportunities and do so joyfully.

All of this, all of our serving is to be done with love. In that way we overcome self-centeredness. Going back to the example of Jesus washing feet, it says **"Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love."** Don't miss that. Here is the King of all heaven and earth, the creator and sustainer of the world, the one who spoke and brought everything into existence, the one who calmed the storm and cast out demons and made the lame to walk, the blind to see and the deaf to hear stooping to take on the role of a servant, to serve by washing feet. It wasn't just to be an example, it was to show them His love for them.

**So how do we make this practical?**

Several weeks ago during one of the Adult Impact discussions classes someone had an idea. It's simple really, worth our consideration.

Put a list out for people who need help. Brilliant. Why are we so afraid to ask or help when the body of Christ is there to serve each other? My question is this: Is there someone who would be willing to take on that task of organizing a list and keeping it up to date?

Your task is to check the list over and see if there is something you can do.

It may be helping clean out a garage.

It may be babysitting.

It may be some yard work that is too difficult to tackle alone.

It may be simple auto service.

It may be providing a ride to an appointment.

Several years ago when I had my injections in the back I couldn't drive, but someone gave up their time to drive me to Ann Arbor, not once but three times.

You may want to serve by helping in AMEN once a month.

You may want to serve by helping in the nursery.

The only limit to our serving one another is our own imagination. **What are we doing to love one another in love?** In Adult Impact don't just talk about what it is to serve one another in love, come up with some things you can do and then get out there and serve one another.

**Acts 2:42-47**

From the pen of Howard Benjamin Grose come the lyrics to this hymn *Give of the Best to the Master*:

Give of your best to the Master,  
 Give Him first place in your heart;  
 Give Him first place in your service;  
 Consecrate every part.  
 Give, and to you shall be given –  
 God His beloved Son gave;  
 Gratefully seeking to serve Him,  
 Give Him the best that you have.

**“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart,  
 as working for the Lord, not for men.”**

**Colossians 3:23**