**THE HEART OF THE SERVANT**

Sunday School Lesson 1

*Servants of Christ*

Ephesians 6:5-7

8/6/2023

**Introduction:** Now that we have finished our lesson series on relationships, we are going to move forward to the topic of Christian service. All believers are called to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we think about our theme for the year of strengthening the family of God, we ought to understand the need for willing servants in the church who will lead in the work that it takes to strengthen others. We can have great relationships with others, but if we are not being good and faithful servants of the Lord, we are going to fail in seeing the church family strengthened. Servitude is a very common theme of the New Testament, as the word *servant* is found nearly 150 times. Christ calls His disciples to be His servants. He references servants in at least seven of the parables that are recorded in Scripture. Before we get into some Bible principles for our first lesson, let’s consider what the definition of a servant is: 1. A person, male or female, that attends another for the purpose of performing menial offices for him, or who is employed by another for such offices or for other labor, and is subject to his command. The word is correlative to master. Servant differs from slave, as the servant's subjection to a master is voluntary. Every slave is a servant, but every servant is not a slave. During today’s lesson, we are going to consider the heart of the servant.

1. **AS SERVANTS OF CHRIST, WE MUST SERVE THE LORD WITH SINGLENESS OF HEART.**

* Ephesians 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Colossians 3:22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Acts 2:46) Being a good servant for the Lord requires for us to serve Him with singleness of heart. We have to be all in when it comes to our desire to serve Him. We cannot split our heart between two masters. This will lead to us hating one of the masters. This will lead to us failing our Master. We must strive to do everything in our Christian service out of love for the Lord. Love for Him must be our motivator. When we sing in the choir, we ought to do it because we love the Lord not just because we love to sing. When we work in the nursery, we ought to do it because we love the Lord and desire for the children to be cared for to allow for others to hear the message from God without distractions. We ought not to do it just because we love working with babies or small children. We are called to do everything heartily to the Lord (Col. 3:23).

1. **AS SERVANTS OF CHRIST, WE MUST EXAMINE WHO WE ARE TRYING TO PLEASE.**

* Ephesians 6:6a not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, Matthew 12:18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. If you work a job, isn’t it reasonable to seek to please your boss? How much more reasonable is it, then, for Christian servants to seek to please Christ? The Bible shows us that the difficulty is that we often are inclined to want to be menpleasers instead of pleasers of Christ. Paul said that if he yet pleased men, he should not be the servant of Christ. The truth is that you can’t be much of a servant of Christ if you are seeking to please men. The goals and purposes between men and Christ do not align. Men focus on the earthly and temporal, but Christ focuses on the Heavenly and eternal. We must constantly be examining the motives of our service. You are not serving for a pastor or even for a parent. You are serving the Lord. Let’s consider the primary reasons for why we struggle so much with pleasing men in our service to the Lord:
  + Pleasing men lowers the bar considerably on what is acceptable Christian service.
  + We lack confidence in our service; thus, we crave immediate affirmation from others.
  + There’s more pressure to please the one who we deem to be the most visible.
  + We are pleased with ourselves through the service. (It provides a sense of self-satisfaction.)
  + We can fool men with our outward acts of service, but we cannot fool Christ.

1. **AS SERVANTS OF CHRIST, WE MUST SERVE THE LORD WITH GOOD WILL.**

* Ephesians 6:6b doing the will of God from the heart; 7 with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: 8 knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Philippians 1:15
* Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: Acts 8:18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. The thought here is regarding our intentions or general disposition when it comes to serving the Lord. We are to do it with a sense of good will both toward the Master and toward the object of the work. This can be difficult because serving the Lord may often involve serving difficult and sinful men. We must keep a right spirit about us, as we serve the Lord. Additionally, we are not to serve Him for greedy gain or selfish benefit. Simon the Sorcerer tried this attitude of service, and Peter had to rebuke him. Lastly, we are not to serve the Lord begrudgingly as if He were some type of unreasonable taskmaster. We have a loving Master who considers our needs and capabilities.

1. **AS SERVANTS OF CHRIST, WE MUST SERVE THE LORD WITH JOYFULNESS AND GLADNESS.**

* Deuteronomy 28:47 Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; 48 therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. Psalm 100:2 Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. In continuing our thought about not serving the Lord with a begrudging attitude, we understand that we are expected to serve the Lord with joyfulness and gladness. This has to come from the heart. It requires the love for the Lord that we mentioned above. It requires seeing His will as a good work to be done. It requires for us to want to please Him and not men. Serving others for their approval will inevitably lead to a place of frustration, anger, and even disappointment. We ought to serve the Lord with the attitude that we get to work the greatest work in all of the world. We ought to stand in awe of the fact that we get to serve Him. A person who does not enjoy the work that he does will be challenged to continue in that work for a sustained period of time. We are expected to be servants of Christ for our entire lives. If we do not even enjoy it, how long will it be before we burn out and quit on our Christian faith?

1. **AS SERVANTS OF CHRIST, WE MUST NOT ALLOW LAZINESS AND APATHY INTO OUR HEARTS.**

* Matthew 24:48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49 and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50 the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, In looking at the parable of the wicked servant, we see that he allowed laziness to enter into his heart. He said in his heart that the master wasn’t coming yet. This means that he did not want the master to come. He was too consumed with his own activities to focus any efforts on the work of the master. There are many Christians who are in a similar position today. They have become very lazy and apathetic toward their service to Jesus Christ. It is an inconvenience to their weekly schedule to have to do any service in the church. This is a servant with a wicked heart toward the things of God. Each of us ought to examine ourselves to see what our attitude toward Christian service truly is. If we moan and groan any time we have to do anything, that speaks to our attitude and lazy disposition toward our Heavenly assignment. We ought to examine how far down the back burner we’ve allowed our service to Christ to slip to.

1. **BEING A SERVANT OF CHRIST OUGHT TO BE A WILLFUL ACT OF SUBMISSION TO THE LORD.**

* Matthew 20:27 and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28 even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. John 12:26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. As mentioned in the intro, a servant voluntarily submits his will to another. When we think about the heart of a servant, this has to start with one who is willing even to see himself as a servant. We know that even Christ came with a ministry of service. Let’s be willing like Christ to have a heart of a servant.