

A Year of Spiritual Disciplines at Eagle UMC
August 2008

Service

What is Service:

Service is not merely a spiritual discipline; it is a way of life. Once you start down the road to service you will find it so rewarding you will not want to stop, you'll even wonder why you didn't start sooner. *So what exactly is the Spiritual Discipline of Service?*

Service is a concrete expression of our love for Jesus and our desire to be more like him. "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve." (Matt 20: 26-28). Jesus calls his followers to serve one another in the same manner.

Through service you will come to understand what Jesus has called you to be. You will recognize that He has given you the spiritual gifts needed to accomplish that calling. You will blossom spiritually.

For this to take place, you must work to transform three vital areas of your life:

- The Heart (Emotionally/Spiritually)
- The Head (Intellectually/Spiritually)
- The Hands (Physically/Spiritually)

The Heart

Service is aimed at the blessing of those being served, yet there are many benefits and joys that arise out of this discipline. The grace of humility is worked into our lives through service; building community, giving purpose, and filling you with real joy and happiness.

The Head

The call to service should cause us to reflect upon our current circumstances. The higher, the more honorable, the more financially rewarded our position in life, the more it should be directed to the benefit of others. The more diligent we must be in serving and encouraging them.

However, there is a difference between choosing to serve and being a servant. Being a servant is giving up the right to have ourselves in charge and instead following the divine. We must act with Christ-like unselfishness. Otherwise we run the risk of self-righteous service.

Self-righteous service needs to know that people see and appreciate your effort. True service is content to remain hidden. It does not fear the lights of attention, but it does

not seek them either. Remember, there is as much, if not more joy in a hidden life of service than in an open and successful one.

The Hands

Service begins with the most simple acts of respect and kindness – being on time for appointments, keeping one’s commitments and promises, bringing food to a sick neighbor, sending a card of appreciation or affirmation, letting people know that you noticed their kindness or encouragements, listening – small things done with great love. Peter urged his readers to put on humility and be servants of one another (1 Peter 5:5)

Getting Started:

How do we discover what gifts God has given us and how he wants us to serve? While there are no simple hard and fast rules, here are a few suggestions to help guide you.

- Visit any of the following websites and take the one of the surveys to help you determine where your spiritual gifts might lay:
 - <http://buildingchurch.net/g2s.htm>
 - <http://mintools.com/spiritual-gifts-test.htm#begin>
 - http://www.fbchsv.org/biblestudy/gifts/gifts_inventory.html
- Talk to those who you believe are gifted in the areas you want to explore. When you resonate with someone else’s gifts, it may be the Holy Spirit’s way of helping you identify your own.
- Begin to experiment with the gifts you feel drawn to. Allow time for the Holy Spirit to develop and confirm the gifts he has for you. He will present you with needs and opportunities. As you respond, you will find out where you are useful and how you are drawn to serve.
- Examine your motivation and feelings. When you enjoy something, you usually do a better job of it. The Holy Spirit will generally match spiritual gifts with your temperament, personality, ability and experiences.
- Evaluate your effectiveness. What is God accomplishing through you? Where are you effective in helping people? Where are you getting positive feedback?
- Expect confirmation of your gift(s) to come from the body of Christ. Don’t rely on just your feelings, wishes or dreams. What God has given you will be confirmed in many ways, but especially by others in the faith.
- Trust in God’s grace. You may receive a call to service in an area where you have no gifts, indeed where you are weak. In our weakness God’s strength, wisdom and power are revealed. God’s grace is sufficient.

Ideas for more in-depth practice:

- Volunteer! The things we do that we don't get paid for speak volumes about our character and allegiance to Christ. Help with a dinner for the homeless, visit someone at a nursing home; volunteer at a local animal shelter...the opportunities are endless. The following website is an excellent resource for those interested in volunteering. Once you enter your zip code, it will return all the organizations in your area that are looking for volunteer help.
<http://www.volunteermatch.org/search/>

Testimonial:

- Mary Cole shared this with us – A reminder that service not only serves God but also brings joy, challenge, fulfillment and good memories for those who serve.

Serving our Lord and Savior has always been a source of joy and fulfillment to me.

Beginning in the late 1970's at the little UM Church building here near the elementary school, my first assignment was teaching the Jr. High Class – a challenge! Next came the position of worship chairman. In those days that meant everything from making coffee to filling in as nursery attendant and at Christmas time gathering greens to decorate the sanctuary!

The learning I gained from Stephen's Ministry classes has been of great help not only in serving in that role, but in the years since, in daily life among friends and family, sharing their trials and sorrows and the celebrations too.

Remembering joyous times brings to mind the fun we "senior ladies" had in the church kitchen – preparing and serving snacks during all the years of helping with Bible School.

Since then, being a part time leader in our small group Bible study has been a challenge and a joy.

- Mary Coyle

Biblical Basis:

- “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.: - 1 Peter 4:10 NIV
- “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” – Gal 5:13
- “... Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.... We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” – Rom 12:2, 6-8
- “Faith without works...is dead” – James 2:26