

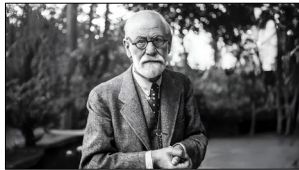
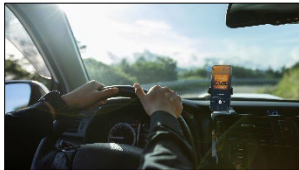
To Serve and Perfect

What We Get From Giving

March 9, 2025



Today we're learning *why we should want to serve others!* Cuz one of the clearest *commands* we have as *Christians* is serving *others* – but one of the deepest *desires* we have as *humans* is serving *ourselves*. And until we have a good enough *reason* to tip the scales in favor of *others*, we've got some *work* to do. So, let's *start* with an honest *assessment*: **do you prefer to serve or be served?**



Really *think* about it, cuz *self-serving* is *sneaky!* And **even our most selfless moments can get tainted by selfish thoughts.** For example, generally, I pray my *longest* prayer of the day while *driving* cuz I'm able to speak casually *out loud* with God about what I got *going on*; everything from *people* and *projects* to *health* and *hobbies*. But – *three times* this year, I *caught* my *self-serving* heart trying to *sneak* into my *prayers*. Cuz *three times* now, instead of *addressing* my prayer to *God*, I've accidentally *started* by saying "**Alexa.**" Uh-oh... I just *started* my conversation with the *Creator* of the *universe* like I was about to set a *reminder*, make a *shopping list*, or *google* a *question!* At least I haven't made the *opposite* mistake... *yet!* Cuz according to Sigmund Freud, the *founder* of *psychoanalysis*, this kind of '*slip*' occurs when our *unconscious* thoughts bubble up to the *surface* and influence *conscious* behaviors. Which makes *sense*, cuz I *know* what I was *about* to pray for – and *subconsciously*, I was treating *God* as my *digital assistant* rather than *spiritual superior*. Because **it's easy to see a server as inferior.** And yet, **helpers are anything but helpless!** In fact, **a server's whole role is to provide what we can't or won't.**

Think about public servants like teachers, *firefighters*, and *social workers* – they're *not* beneath us, *they* actually possess *superior* skills that *we* need. Cuz regardless of whether we're *incapable* or *unwilling*, what really *defines* our servers is that **servers step in where we fall short.**

[And because *we all* fall short, *Jesus stepped in:*] For even the Son of Man did *not* come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. – Mark 10:43-45 NIV

[But, He *also* said:] I have set you an *example* that you should *do* as I have done *for you* ... Now that you *know* these things, you will be blessed if you *do* them. – John 13:12-17 NIV

Do not merely *listen* to the Word, and so *deceive* yourselves. Do what it says. – James 1:22 NIV

Contrary to what *some* Christians *think*, **Jesus didn't serve to let us off the hook, but to put us on the spot.** We're supposed to see *His* example of *serving* as our *call* to *follow* – because somehow, *serving* is supposed to *help us* overpower *death* and live a life beyond *this world* – the way Jesus' humble *love* made Him the *first* to ever conquer the *grave*:

I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. – John 16:33 NIV

Cuz remember, Jesus is *not* saying, **“Don’t worry; I’ve conquered it for you,”** He’s saying, **“I’ve overcome the world,”** as in, **“Don’t worry; you can too!”** Which is why John later says:



Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. – 1 John 5:5 NIV



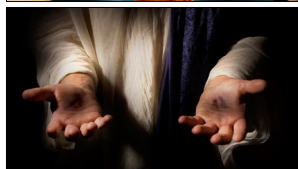
Cuz when we *believe* that only Jesus *knew* what we have to *do* to *escape death* – His example becomes *our plan!* And as He said *Himself*, He came to *serve*. So, the question is, **how is serving the secret to our salvation?** Well, **servicing is both sanctifying and satisfying.**



Y’see, *sanctification* is just *transformation* – it’s the *process* of replacing our *sinful* lives with *holy* ones – and **every act of Jesus-like servicing eliminates an opportunity for life-threatening sin.** Basically, if we’re *busy* doing the *good* God wants, we *won’t* have *time* to give in to *sin*. Ever hear the saying **“Idle hands are the devil’s workshop”** – well, *it’s biblical:*



[Paul says] Do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been *stealing* must *steal no longer*, but must *work, doing something useful with their own hands*, that they may have something to *share* with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. – Ephesians 4:27-29 NIV



By putting our focus on *helping others*, **servicing stops sin before it starts.** Cuz it keeps our focus *off* the *self-serving sin* of *this world’s* ways.

[The way Jesus says] Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? – Matthew 16:25-26 NIV

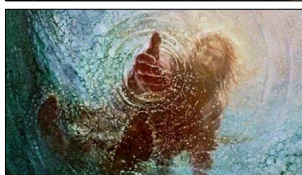
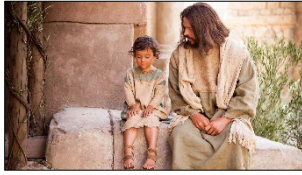
And *that’s not* a *rhetorical* question! He *just* answered it – **give your worldly life to Jesus and you get eternal life for your soul.** And we *know* that *giving our life* for someone *else* is the *ultimate* act of *servicing*, cuz after saying He *came* to *serve*, Jesus *added* **“to give His life as ransom for many.”**

Therefore, [says Paul,] I urge you, brothers and sisters, *in view of God’s mercy*, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this [self-serving] world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind [as you give your life over to Jesus’ service]. – Romans 12:1-2 NIV

Cuz in the end, **every life has the same choice: conform or transform.** We can follow the way of *this world* which *inevitably* leads to *death* or we can point ourselves in the *opposite* direction which *logically* leads to *life*. Cuz when we choose to *oppose* this *self-serving world* – by modeling our *lives* after a *self-sacrificing* Jesus – we start to *transform* our *identity* as we *discover* our *purpose*. Which Paul *explains* and John says how to *attain:*

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to *put off your old self*, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new *in the attitude of your minds*; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. – Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV

[Cuz] He who *practices* righteousness is righteous, just as [Jesus] is righteous. – 1 John 3:7 NKJ



We were *created to be like God in true righteousness* – which takes *practicing* righteousness – which takes *serving others*. Cuz **keeping our actions out of evil's reach keeps them under God's influence.** And every day we serve *others over ourselves*, we discover *more godly truths* that *inspire and encourage* our ongoing *transformation* because **serving satisfies the deeper goals of our souls.** In fact, once we *reject* the *underwhelming* offerings of *this world*, each *higher desire* that we *develop* is revealed to be *in reach* of our *true self*. Cuz following Jesus teaches **serving is a sign of strength, serving helps us find and flex our strength, and serving connects and completes us!**

Ultimately, serving guides us to uncover our true identity as a powerful instrument of God to *edify, unify, and sanctify* all His children – just as Jesus did. Which is both an *honor* and a *necessity*. Because **there's a few things God can't do without a servant's help.** And this includes His #1 priority; **He can't change our heart!** He keeps that task out of His hands because we can't have true love without free will. So **when we step up to serve others, we're really helping Him to humble our heart** so we can develop the love that has the power to hold us together once we're reunited. So, keep that in mind when the serving gets tough – and:

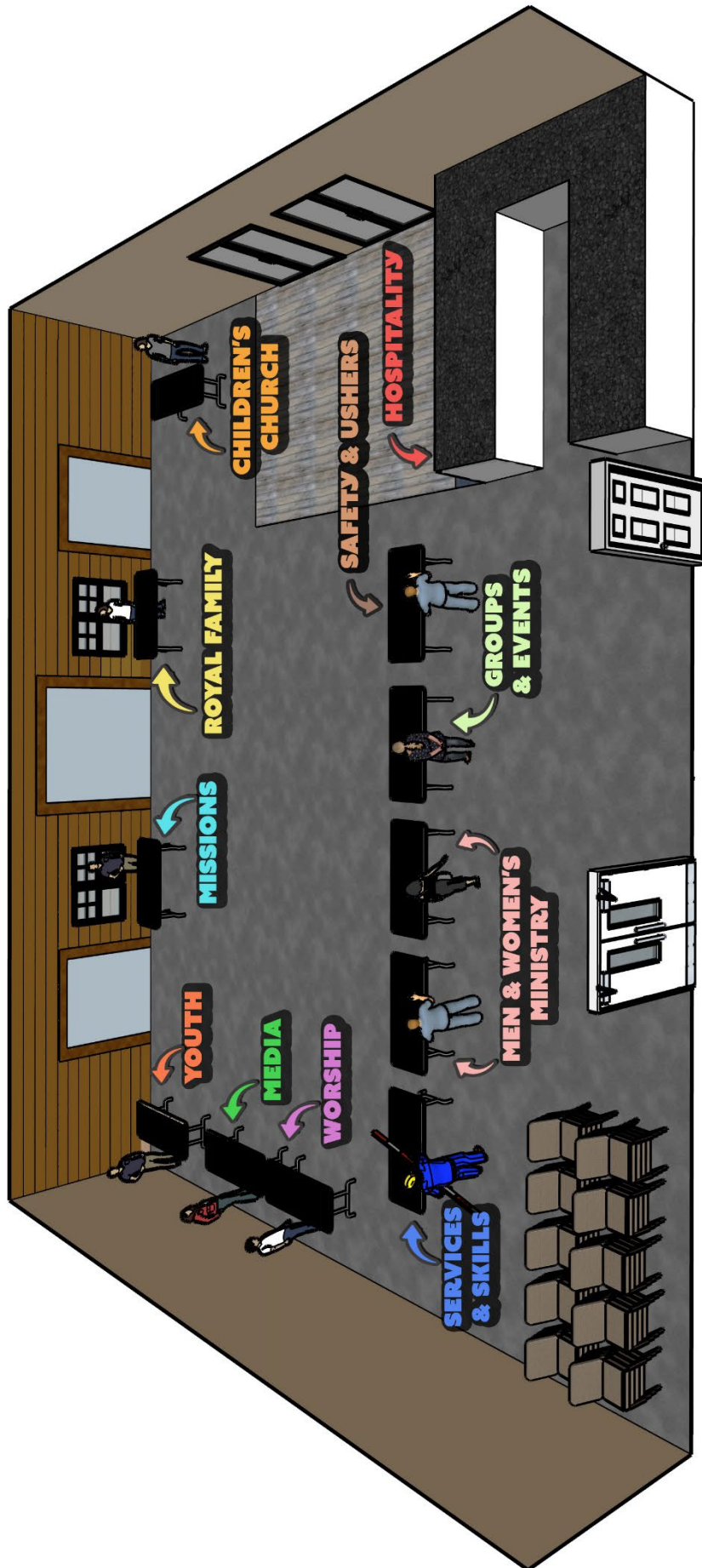
Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people – Ephesians 6:7 NIV

Because the best part is, **serving Him means saving us!** That's His *big goal* – and as much as we'd like to believe in *our ability* – we didn't know how to serve Him until He sent Jesus to serve us. Proving no matter what, **we can't out-give God!** The best we can do is try to follow His example.

So, **do you prefer to serve or be served?** Well, you won't know until you try! But God promises it's *serving others* by a million miles! Cuz **when serving sanctifies our actions it transforms our life.** And we can begin to see our true identity. And **when serving reveals our identity, it satisfies our soul!** Because finding our *fit* is the very definition of *fulfillment!*

And that's what *church* is all about – **finding your fit to serve your part in the body of Christ** – so every soul with a higher desire can be *sanctified* and *satisfied!* And to help you out, we have a *special treat* for you today – all of our ministries *here* at His Place have set up *booths* for you to *peruse* with all the opportunities we have to serve each other and the Lord! Think of it as a **"Ministry Fair"** that is designed to help you **plug into your created purpose so you can accelerate your transformation from helpless human to satisfied soul!** So, take a look at the tables on the map on the back of your transcript and summon the courage to take the uncomfortable step away from your same ol' life and toward an exciting eternity of unpredictable encouragement!

FIND YOUR FIT TO SERVE YOUR PURPOSE



Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.