

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, November 5, 2014 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



AUTHENTIC SERVANTHOOD

“Introduction”

Selected Scriptures

Selfishness has become a way of life today, but probably not just today. Selfishness has really plagued man ever since the fall. We think about ourselves, watch out for ourselves, talk about ourselves, and we defend ourselves when confronted with criticism. Ours is indeed a “me-first” generation that finds itself in a confused tailspin, preoccupied and smug with its own needs, yet desperately lonely, isolated, and cold. We are losing touch with one another, running faster even though we have lost our way.

This Bible study series offers straight talk and solid, biblical answer on how to live an unselfish life... how to be a people-helper, how to serve rather than always expecting to receive, how to give rather than striving to get and keep... what we are talking about is authentic servanthood.

Isn't that what Jesus Christ, Himself, modeled and proclaimed? Wasn't He the One who said He didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom? And when He had the opportunity to take charge and do things His way, wasn't He the One who obeyed the Father, serving Him in authentic humility?

My prayer is that you will sense in this Bible study an unusual amount of encouragement to begin to reflect the genuine, authentic servant heart of Jesus.

Now, often today the word “servant” today conjures up images of a person who is beneath others, a person who waits on others, perhaps someone that in our society might be characterized as a “door mat” for others to walk on. But God's Word often pictures the truly devoted follower and disciple of Christ as a “servant” sometimes even referring

to those who were devout followers as “bond servants.” God exhorts all those who have been born into His forever family to become true, biblical servants... to exhibit authentic servanthood. So if we are going to obey the Lord’s command, then we need to know what a servant is and how we can become one.

I. A FOUNDATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON SERVANTHOOD

A. What God desires of your life, Christian?

Couched in the grand declaration of assurance in **Romans 8:28-29** is a brief, yet foundational statement about what God desires to do in the lives of His people.

Look at these verses carefully even though they are familiar;

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, and have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

In regard to Christian, God is committed to one major objective: to conform them to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

B. What God desires of for your life to look like, Christian?

Well, then what is the “image of His Son”? Listen to what the Apostle Paul said in **Philippians 2:5-11**;

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking on the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death of a cross...” (vv.5-8)

Christ, Himself, explained it very simply when He declared His primary reason for taking on a sinless human nature;

“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.” (Mt. 20:28)

Characteristics of the Christian Life:

1. serving others
2. giving of yourself

Jesus’ life on earth was characterized by serving and giving. Indeed, these qualities are inseparable; they are the very essence of servanthood. And it is

a servant's heart that the Heavenly Father wants to develop in the lives of His people... nothing less.

II. AN EXAMPLE OF AUTHENTIC SERVANTHOOD: PAUL

Besides Jesus Christ, perhaps the finest model of a servant was the Jewish-Christian apostle name Paul. He began many of his letters with phrases that described himself as a “servant” of God (e.g., see his opening remarks in Romans, Philippians, and Titus). He also exemplified the marks of a servant in numerous ways, all of which can be classed under the following three categories.

A QUICK PICTURE OF SAUL TO PAUL – Acts 7:54-8:3, Acts 9:1-9, 19bff

1. Saul based his life on being strong, powerful, successful and in control – What happened when he met the Lord?
2. Saul's life was characterized by pride, arrogance, and oppression of others to keep them beneath him – Seen in Stephens murder. Saul was holding the cloaks, leaving the menial task of taking another's life in the hand of others
3. Saul's life was unethical, dishonest and corrupt - Example... murder of good and godly people

3 Marks of Authentic Servanthood in the Life of Paul:

1. Transparent Humanity –

In **1 Corinthians 2:1-3** Paul wrote; *“When I came to you, brother, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony of God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.”*

Was Paul just being modest? No, he was being quite honest, transparently honest. Just look at what popular assessment of Paul was. Later in **2 Corinthians 10:10** Paul's detractors were saying this against him, *“His letters were weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible.”* That is what the Corinthians said about him. Paul wasn't perfect, and he openly admitted it. Like Paul, a servant doesn't try to hide his or her humanity but lays it bare when appropriate for others to see.

Observation: We need to know and admit/acknowledge our weaknesses... not try to hide, cover, or conceal them. Remember in our weakness we are made strong. Knowing and admitting your weakness frees God to work in those areas. You are more dependent on Him.

2. Genuine Humility –

Paul expressed this quality of servanthood in these words in **1 Corinthians 2:4-5**, *“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words,*

but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."

Paul readily admitted that his preaching was unimpressive. He made this admission to draw attention, not to his own inability, but to God's ability... God power to enable. Paul desired that people become increasingly more impressed with the living God and less so with himself. This suggest two revealing tests of genuine humility:

2 Tests of Genuine Humility:

1. **Does the person manifest a non-defensive spirit with confronted?** This test involved a willingness to be accountable.
2. **Does the person express an authentic desire to help others?** – This test involves a sensitive awareness of the needs and struggles of others.

**Both of these features characterize a genuine servants heart.*

3. Absolute Honesty –

Paul proclaimed that his ministry was marked by integrity. Consider these statements of his:

2 Corinthians 4:2, *"Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."*

1 Thessalonians 2:3-4, *"For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts."*

Often our service in the church is not rooted in honesty... (check yourself out)

Signs Your Service May Not Be Rooted in Honesty:

1. **Ulterior motives** – Our motives behind our service may be impure, to draw attention to ourselves, to get our name in the lime light, or get a pat on the back. Sometimes we must really do some soul searching to get to the bottom of this. We can even deceive ourselves at this point. What really motivates you to do what you do?
2. **Hypocrisy** – We are serving more out of a sense of duty than from a servants heart, and we may serve but we don't really want to and we serve grudgingly or with a sour attitude.
3. **Duplicity** – We are serving because we have been caught in double talk.

- 4. Political games (agendas)** – We are serving to forward our own agenda or cause, to garner respect in order to have the authority to push our own ideas and plans. Some may view their service as a “power grab.”

**These things do not mark a genuine servant's heart.*

III. TRAITS OF A GENUINE SERVANT'S LIFE

Traits of a True Servant's Life:

- 1. An openness to scrutiny**
- 2. An unswerving commitment to truth**
- 3. A dedication to follow through on one's word**
- 4. An unwillingness to manipulate others**

**These are some of the signs of a life permeated with honesty, integrity and a true servant's heart*

As we embark on this mission of becoming genuine, authentic servants, let's commit ourselves to be open to God's Word, to be sensitive to the conviction and life-changing power of God's Spirit, and to be honest with ourselves. Only with this attitude on our part will God be able to transform us into the kind of servants He wants us to be.