



Introduction

Everyone likes to be served. Not many people want to serve. Being a servant involves doing work that someone else could do. Being a servant involves giving up time or energy so that someone else can benefit. Being a servant is work.

Jesus calls his disciples to be servants. He calls us by His own example. He calls us with stories. He calls us with direct challenges.

He wants us first to be servants of God. Then, He wants us to serve each other. His expectations are high. He expects us each to serve.

This study will look at the call to servanthood and provide insights into the rationale of serving.

Jesus, The Servant

Jesus taught servanthood with his life and his words.

⁴³ *Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,* ⁴⁴ *and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.* ⁴⁵ *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

- In verse 43, circle the role that one who wants to be great must assume.
- In verse 44, underline the role that one who wants to be first must assume.
- In verse 44, draw a box around the number of people to be served.
- *The Greek word for servant in verse 43 is **diakonos** while the Greek word in verse 44 is **doulos** (see sidebar). More of a commitment to serve is required of someone wanting to be first than of someone wanting to be great. But servanthood is required of both.*
- In verse 45, underline the reason Jesus came.
- *Do you think that giving His life as a ransom for many was an act of servanthood? Why or why not?*

Paul describes Jesus' example of servanthood to the Philippian church.

⁶ *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,* ⁷ *but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant (doulos), being made in human likeness.* ⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross!*

Philippians 2:6-8

- In verse 7, underline the nature that Jesus took.
- In verse 7, circle the two ways he was "made".
- *When Jesus chose to leave the very nature of God to take on human likeness, it must have seemed to Him like he was becoming nothing.*
- In verse 8, underline the results of Jesus being a servant.

People don't mind being called "servant". Many government officials call themselves **public servants**.

The thing people mind is being *treated* like a servant. That is, they do not want people to **expect** them to serve. They like to serve when it is convenient.

The New Testament primarily uses two Greek words to convey the idea of servant.

diakonos, usually means one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master; a sergeant, attendant or superior. It can also be translated deacon. It also might convey the idea of one who serves food.

doulos, usually means a slave, bondman, man of servile condition. It implies one who gives him self up wholly to another's will, or one devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests.

Humility and Servanthood are connected. To learn more about humility look at the **VDRC** Study on **Humility** in the **Character** group of the **VDRC** Bible Studies Section

On one occasion, Jesus gave a very specific object lesson to His disciples. After dinner, he washed their feet. Then, he explained his action in this way:

¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

John 13:13-17

- In verse 14, underline what Jesus is directing His disciples to do.
- In verse 15, circle the reason Jesus gave this example.
- In verse 17, circle the result of knowing and doing.

Paul, A Servant

In the introduction and body of many of the letters he wrote, Paul identified himself as a **doulos**, or servant. He describes his servanthood in a few important passages.

¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

- In verse 19, underline what Paul, the free man, made himself.
- "Slave" in verse 19 is a derivative of the Greek word **doulos**.
- Draw a box in verse 19 around why he made himself a slave.
- The word "win" is a key word in this passage. Circle each place that you find it.
- Verses 22 and 23 state Paul's reason for becoming a slave. Write the reason in your own words.

Paul was focused on accomplishing the mission that God had given him. So, he used every means to persuade men to turn their lives to Christ.

But Paul was not simply focused on winning men to Christ. He deeply cared about the new believers. His letters are an evidence of the love and care he gave to the churches he started. One letter in particular describes the lengths to which Paul went to serve the people who had become believers.

Jesus was clearly the master. In normal life you would expect the master to be the one who is served.

Jesus' example makes it clear that **no one ever progresses to the point where they no longer serve**. He, the greatest, became their servant. We are to do the same.

Paul calls himself a bondservant in the following letters:

Romans 1:1
2 Corinthians 4:5
Galatians 1:10
Philippians 1:1
Colossians 1:23
Titus 1:1



The title of bondservant was not one that Paul alone used. Almost every New Testament writer claimed the title of servant"



James 1:1
2 Peter 1:1
Jude 1:1

Does the word **slave** bother you?

Slaves have always been people with limited or no rights of their own. So when the writers of the New Testament take on the title of bond slave, they are identifying themselves as men whose rights are fully yielded to their master.

Have you yield your rights to Jesus?

⁷ but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.
⁸ We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.
⁹ Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-9

- In verse 7, circle the phrase describing the manner with which Paul was gentle among them.
- In verse 8 underline the thing beside the gospel that Paul shared with the Thessalonians.
- Box the reason Paul was willing to share his life with them.
- In verse 9, circle the time of day that Paul and his team worked.
- Underline the reason they worked night and day.

Paul invested much time and effort in helping establish the faith of the people whom he led to Christ. Not only did he teach them, but he also worked to provide his own living so as not to be a burden.

Whom Should We Serve?

God made it very clear to the Israelites whom they were to serve.

And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

Deuteronomy 10:12

- Circle the one who is to be served.
- Underline how they were to serve God.
- *The Hebrew word for **serve** also can mean **work for**. So when God commanded them to keep the Sabbath he said, "Six days shall you **labor**" (same word as translated **serve** in this verse).*

But serving God is not just a command to the Israelites. God expects service from Christians as well.

*Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants (**doulos**) of God.*

1 Peter 2:16

- Underline the two ways we are to live.
- ***How is it possible to live as a free man and as a servant (slave) of God?** (You may want to consider Romans 6:16-18)*

Our service is not simply to be directed toward our Heavenly Father. There is also a need to serve the brethren who live around us.

It is possible to serve someone without loving them. However, for the disciple of Jesus, love is an essential ingredient in the character of the servant

Paul's motive for serving the Thessalonians grew out of the love he had for them.

Can you think of other motives that Christians have for serving?

All your heart and Soul...

God asked his people to give him all of their heart and soul in the following ways:

- **Love Him** Deuteronomy 6:5
- **Serve Him** Deuteronomy 10:12
- **Obey Him** Deuteronomy 30:2
- **Walk faithfully** 1 Kings 2:4
- **Turn back** 1 Kings 8:48
- **Follow Him** 2 Kings 23:3

If you choose to serve God, do it with all of your heart.

¹⁶ Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Romans 6:16-18

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.

Galatians 5:13

- Circle to what we are called.
- Underline how we are not to use our freedom.
- Box how we are to use our freedom.
- Circle how we are to serve.

Christians have a special obligation to use the gifts of the spirit they have received in acts of service.

¹⁰ *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

1 Peter 4:10-11

- Underline how a person should use the gifts he has received (verse 10).
- Underline how a person is to serve in verse 11.
- Circle in verse 11 why we should serve with all the strength God provides.
- *In what way is speaking (verse 11) an act of Servanthood?*

Servant Guidelines

There are some guidelines that every servant must be aware of.

"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

Luke 16:13

- Circle who it is that can serve two masters.
- *Every person must make a choice of masters. When a person commits to being Jesus' disciple, there can be no sharing of allegiance between Jesus and some other master.*

Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

John 12:26

- Circle what the person who serves Jesus must do.
- Underline what the Father will do.

Jesus told a story about servants that reveals the attitude a servant should maintain.



God gives each Christian at least one gift of the Spirit. Such gifts are always meant to help others. To learn more about the gifts of the Spirit, access the **vDRC** Study entitled **Spiritual Gifts** in the Study Section of the **vDRC** titled **The Disciple's Relation to Men**.

Even though this verse has money as its focus, the principle applies to any thing competing with God.

There are three good measures that reveal who is your Master.

- On what do you spend your money?
- About what do you like to talk?
- On what will you spend your free time?

Can you explain how these three expenditures of resources would reveal the one to whom we are devoted?

⁷ "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? ⁸ Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? ⁹ Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

Luke 17:7-10

- Verses 7-9 are used by Jesus to ask questions that have obvious answers. The questions are meant to lead to the conclusion in verse 10.
- Underline what a servant is to **do** in verse 10.
- Circle what a servant is to **say** in verse 10.
- The word **duty** literally means **to owe**. So a more literal translation might read "we have only done what **we owe**". It's as if we are so grateful for God's grace that there is not enough we can do to repay Him.

Summary

Jesus was a servant. He left heaven to become a man so that He might redeem all men. He served by dying. He taught His disciples that the greatest one was the one who served. He taught by actions like when He washed their feet.

Paul was a servant. He became whatever he needed to be so as to save some. He also served those he won. He likened himself to a mother caring for her child. He worked hard so as to not burden those he was helping.

Christians are called to serve God, just as the Israelites were called to serve Him. We are also called to serve each other. One way we are to serve is by using the gifts of the Spirit that have been given to us.

Servants must be careful to put God first in their service. God honors those who serve Him.

Application

In what way has God spoken to you about your life as a servant?

Is there some application you need to make?

Write out the plan for your application.

What is your plan for checking up on yourself.

We must be careful when we describe ourselves as "unworthy". Always keep in mind that you are of incomparable worth to God. He sent His Son to die so that you might be redeemed.

Yet, when it comes to the things we do for God and others, we cannot claim special privilege. And, we cannot claim that we merited the salvation that God provided. We are unworthy, but of great worth.

Look back through the study and find the verse that the summary statement reflects. Write the verse references in the space to the right of each summary paragraph.

Don't skip the application. God's Word must be practiced with the heart not just learned with the head.