

## Spiritual Disciplines: Submission and Service

February 17, 2013

The disciplines that we have looked at to date, study of the Word, prayer, meditation, and waiting on God lead us to the next disciplines of submission and service. When we truly commune with God, we submit ourselves to His direction. Someone asked if waiting on the Lord could mean waiting like a waiter who serves. No, it is not used in that sense; however, waiting on the Lord always leads to serving the Lord. <sup>3</sup> (Isaiah 40:31; Exodus 20:5)

God is a God of order. He establishes authority. Authority directs service. Since He is the supreme authority He tells us: <sup>4</sup> *You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.* Deuteronomy 13:4 (ESV) To walk after and revere is a way of saying that we worship our Creator. What follows is the expectation to obey and serve Him.

God establishes authority in the world through governments, in the church through elders, and in the home through the father. Because He has put these levels of authority in our world, we are expected to submit to them. Submitting to them is submitting to God who gave them that position, with the rare exception of any of these telling us to do something contrary to the Word of God. (Romans 13:1) Without order and authority, chaos ensues as each individual does what they selfishly please. (Deuteronomy 12:8) Anarchists ignore the warnings of history. There is nothing good about anarchy. It is the Devil's delight!

When we first hear about submission and service our old nature cringes. It should! All the disciplines put our foot on the throat of our old nature, but submission and service will confirm if it is really under our foot or just there in our imagination. We cannot really experience godly submission and service without the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us. (Philippians 2:13) We will never really experience who we were created to be, and the freedom to obey God and serve others until we possess the life that is from above *and* yield to it. Without that supernatural power, we will be working in our own power and we will wear out. We will never know the joy of service and sacrifice without that power. But when you submit to God's authority and find your place of service and the gifting with which God has equipped you, you will experience the joy of fulfilling your purpose. (Ephesians 2:10)

**Submission and service is our loving response to the love we realize we have received.** (1John 4:19) One reason we are so hesitant to submit and serve is because we have seen authority so abused by the world. The world demands we submit and serve because they have the power to make you do so or the supply that you need. It will demand as much as it can possibly get from you with that power.

**Commented [notes1]:** A. W. Tozer put it, "Fellowship with God leads straight to obedience and good works. That is the divine order and it can never be reversed." <sup>8</sup>

Whitney, Donald S. (2012-01-05). *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life with Bonus Content (Pilgrimage Growth Guide)* (p. 127). Navpress. Kindle Edition.

**Commented [notes2]: Isaiah 40:31 (ESV)**  
<sup>31</sup> but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

**Commented [notes3]: Exodus 20:5 (ESV)**  
<sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,

**Commented [notes4]: Romans 13:1 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup> Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

**Commented [notes5]: Deuteronomy 12:8 (ESV)**  
<sup>8</sup> "You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes,

**Commented [notes6]: Philippians 2:13 (ESV)**  
for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

**Commented [notes7]: Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**  
<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Commented [notes8]: 1 John 4:19 (ESV)**  
<sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us.

The Kingdom of God is completely different. It draws us in love to serve with gladness. The Psalmist wrote, *"Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with singing!"* Psalm 100:4 KJV It is quite the opposite of the world's ways. The enemy is very clever in trying to get us to think that God is like the world and that His demands are drudgery. In fact, submission to our Maker and service to Him is true freedom. (John 8:32)

**Commented [notes9]: John 8:32 (ESV)**  
<sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

When we talk about serving in church, people often think of becoming a missionary or a pastor. Those are ways to serve, but 99% of service will be in a million other ways. It happens in our daily lives, not just in church. A few get excited about service for the wrong reasons such as adventure and the excitement! They imagine going to foreign lands and maybe even dying as a martyr. Others think of service as a way to gain respect and be honored. But the bulk of service in the Christian life comes in unseen ways. By love we serve one another. (Galatians 5:13) Service that demands to be seen and recognized is self-serving. God rewards the unseen, secret, hidden service done only because of love for Him.

**Commented [notes10]:** <sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (esv)

This makes me think of one of your elders, Ryan. He has a grueling work week doing the work of 3 different positions, gets up around 5A.M. on his day off and drives 45 minutes to cook breakfast for the men's gathering. That's enough right? But no, then with a smile on his face and joy in his heart he tries to hog the blessing of doing the dishes for 50 men. This is the kind of elder you want to submit to, one who serves you in love and challenges you with his service to serve others. Most service is off the stage, unnoticed by anyone but the recipient and God. It is just seeing what needs to be done and doing it out of love for Jesus, whether anyone ever finds out our not. (Matthew 6:4) Pride will remind people of all its sacrifices. Love quietly serves.

**Commented [notes11]: Matthew 6:4 (ESV)**  
<sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The people who slip into the prayer room to pray for us all as we worship are serving God and serving you behind the scenes. The trustees spend their Tuesday mornings serving in ways that you will never know about. How does the trash get taken out? Who changed the light bulbs? How did the projector get fixed? Who prepared communion? It was done by servants of the Most High God. That is the honorary title that the authors of most of the New Testament letters introduced themselves as, servants of Christ Jesus.

Every recipient of the salvation that Jesus offers us has a gift to be used for His kingdom. Peter wrote in 1Peter 4:10: *<sup>10</sup> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:* (ESV) Serving one another is helping someone in some way, preaching, praying, evangelism, cleaning, cooking, organizing, maintenance, counseling, teaching, giving a ride, mentoring, visuals, sound, acting, or that most needed gift of all, the one the Bible calls "helping". (1Corinthians 12:28) That is just to be available to help where needed. It is often an ordinary natural ability

**Commented [notes12]: 1 Corinthians 12:28 (ESV)**  
<sup>28</sup> And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

that is sanctified for God's use.<sup>4</sup> These are all ways we submit to the Lord's leading in our lives and serve Him and one another in love.

It is the service of the elders to equip you to serve. That is why we have a mentors class next week for those of you who have chosen to serve as mentors. After describing authority in the church, Paul wrote that these leaders were <sup>12</sup> *to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up* Ephesians 4:12 (NIV) The service in love that your elders are called to is equipping you to serve. If you need help to discover where you can serve or in exercising the gifts God has given you, come and talk with us. We are here to serve you by helping you serve others. (Acts 20:28)

We have to understand that **the motivation behind submission and service is love.** It was Jesus' love for the Father that brought Him to this world and motivated Him to do the Father's will. (John 14:31) His life was the ultimate example of submission and service. That is clear throughout the gospels, but especially in the book of John. He reminded people again and again that the Great Command was to love God with your all and your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27) He showed what that meant by His continual service of teaching, healing, delivering, and even rebuking the evil around Him knowing it would result in a painful death. He was so submitted that He only did the will of His Father and nothing on His own. (John 12:49-50) Every moment was service. But it was not just because He loved the Father, but because He loves you as well. You see, you can't love God and not end up loving those made in His image, regardless of how far they have fallen.

Following His perfect example, we are to submit to the will of our Father in heaven and out of love for Him and one another live a life of service. Whenever service becomes a drain and you just don't feel like it, go back to worship. That is the source of the power. It renews our realization of how much God has done for us. That love He has for us becomes fresh in our hearts and minds and compels and empowers us. (2Corinthians 5:14) Fellowship with God in the Word and prayer will purge us of self-seeking attitudes and strengthen the love that wants to respond to God's love with service in which God alone is glorified.

John Newton, author of Amazing Grace, wrote about pure motivation in service to God. "If two angels were to receive at the same moment a commission from God, one to go down and rule earth's grandest empire, the other to go and sweep the streets of its meanest village, it would be a matter of entire indifference to each which service fell to his lot, the post of ruler or the post of scavenger; for the joy of the angels lies only in obedience to God's will." <sup>1</sup> The angels serve the Lord with gladness, for they are constantly beholding His glory. In fact, it was the unwillingness to submit and serve that turned one-third of the angels into demons. (Revelation 12:4) What a warning to the believer who thinks they can skirt service, leaving it to others! That is more likely evidence of a heart that has never met the Lord of glory.

**Commented [notes13]:** J. I. Packer reminds us, "The most significant gifts in the church's life in every era are ordinary natural abilities sanctified." 6

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**Commented [notes14]: Acts 20:28 (ESV)**  
<sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

**Commented [notes15]: John 14:31 (ESV)**  
<sup>31</sup> but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

**Commented [notes16]: Luke 10:27 (ESV)**  
<sup>27</sup> And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

**Commented [notes17]: John 12:49-50 (ESV)**  
<sup>49</sup> For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. <sup>50</sup> And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

**Commented [notes18]: 2 Corinthians 5:14 (ESV)**  
<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;

**Commented [notes19]:** Whitney, Donald S. (2012-01-05). *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life with Bonus Content (Pilgrimage Growth Guide)* (p. 118). Navpress. Kindle Edition.

**Commented [notes20]: Revelation 12:4 (ESV)**  
<sup>4</sup> His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

1Samuel 12:24 give us another reason to serve. <sup>24</sup> *Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.* (ESV)

When we think about the grace we have received, God's patience with us, the way He draws us to Himself in spite of all that we have done and said and thought, it should inspire us to serve faithfully with all our heart. (Romans 5:8) Consider the great things He has done for you! We tend to count our problems when we should be counting our blessings. Sometimes we forget how hopeless life was before we came to Christ. We forget the sin burden we felt, the guilt, and the selfishness that dominated our thoughts. On the other hand, now we often take for granted that we can come before the Lord at any time with our burdens and lay them before Him and leave them there. (Philippians 4:6) We forget the change in our attitude and take for granted the song in our heart. God gives us Himself when He gives us salvation. Nothing can compare! You couldn't ask for more if you tried! Consider what great things He has done for you and service will just flow out of gratitude and joy.

Ancient kings would execute a servant who appeared less than joyful for it was a sign of their displeasure with the way the King ran the kingdom. Thankfully, God doesn't do that, but we should remember that **gladness should always be a part of our service.** If we are pleased with God, if we have counted our blessings, then our joy should be evident. When people serve God to earn merit with Him, impress others, or serve out of duty, there is no reason to be glad. It is only when service comes from an overflowing heart that it is truly the discipline of submission and service that pleases Him.

Whether here or in heaven, our joy comes from our service to God and nothing else compares. That is why the psalmist wrote that he would rather be doorkeeper in God's house than to live in the tents of the wicked. (Psalm 84:10) And listen to this description of heaven from the book of Revelation. <sup>3</sup> *No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.* Revelation 22:3 (NIV)

The reason our old nature thinks being a servant would not be so heavenly is because the old nature is utterly selfish. When God's work in us is complete, service will always be with joy and gladness. Accomplishing assignments that please God and others brings a great sense of joy. That is not to say that service is not difficult. Sometimes it is the case that **the greater the difficulty the greater the service and the greater the satisfaction from that service.**

I don't like to go overseas to serve. I usually end up with some sickness, jet lag, and a difficult time conveying the message to another language, but that doesn't mean there isn't joy and real satisfaction from the service. Nor does it mean I should not have gone. Service can be costly, but is more than worth it.

**Commented [notes21]: Romans 5:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**Commented [notes22]: Philippians 4:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

**Commented [notes23]: Psalm 84:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

We must guard ourselves from the thinking of the world that tells us our service must be quantifiable. God is looking for faithfulness, and from that He brings the results in His time. (1Corinthians 3:7) Just because you can't see big results don't be discouraged. Listen to this promise. <sup>58</sup> *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.* 1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV) Your work in the Lord is never in vain! It will be rewarded. (Hebrews 6:10)

**Commented [notes24]: 1 Corinthians 3:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

One message that Jesus' illustrated on that last evening before His crucifixion was of humble service. His disciples gathered for the Last Supper. Apparently no servant was there to wash their feet as they entered. In that day, only the foreign slave was ordered to do such a dirty task. Their sandals had gone through the same streets as those the animals travelled. Jesus saw the need and because no one else met it, He did it. He took a servant's towel and washed His disciples' feet, even the feet of the one He knew was about to betray Him. (John 13:3-5)

**Commented [notes25]: Hebrews 6:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.

He taught them a lesson that is for every follower of Jesus throughout the ages. <sup>13</sup> *You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.* <sup>14</sup> *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.* <sup>15</sup> *For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.* <sup>16</sup> *Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.* <sup>17</sup> *If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.* John 13:13-17 (ESV)

**Commented [notes26]: John 13:3-5 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, <sup>4</sup> rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. <sup>5</sup> Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Humble submitted service is not the path to true greatness it *is* true greatness. Jesus told us that He had come to serve, not to be served. (Mark 10:45) Shouldn't that be our purpose as well? It is upside down from the way the world thinks of greatness, but remember this, Jesus has come to show us truth and free us from the lies of this world.

**Commented [notes27]: Mark 10:45 (ESV)**

<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

When you come to Christ as your Savior you are equipped and empowered to serve but you still have to be willing. Joshua told Israel: <sup>15</sup> *And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.* Joshua 24:15 (ESV) We don't have a choice of if we will serve or not. It is a choice of whom we will serve. You will serve other gods, or your self, or God our loving Creator. Which will you choose?

#### Questions

- 1 How is waiting connected to serving?
- 2 What order has God put in the world?
- 3 How does the world and God's use of authority differ?
- 4 What is the most needed gift?
- 5 What is the elders' service?
- 6 Review John Newton's angel story.
- 7 What is our motivation to serve?

- 8 How does God measure our service?
- 9 Is service to God ever in vain?
- 10 What was Jesus' example?