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## READY TO SERVE

Bishop Scott Gillum



I could start this article with motivational phrases to encourage readers to change their behavior rather than focusing solely on religious teachings. Paul put it this way to the Colossians:

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in Word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:15–17 NKJV)

This verse suggests that our actions—“whatever you do” (v. 17)—are a direct result of having the Word deeply ingrained in our hearts. Instead of just working for God, our lives should express service based on his work within us.

We might tire of working for God, but we should never tire of working with him. We might grow weary in our service, which is natural, but we should never grow tired of service that revolves around him. Serving is not about us; it starts with him working within us. What he does within us will reflect in our lives through our service. Paul, writing to the Philippians, records one of the guiding verses in my life: “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). When our service is focused on ourselves and seeking rewards, it resembles what Jesus warned against in Matthew 6:1–3—performing acts of charity to gain praise from others.

Being ready to serve is about having right motives. Serving with ulterior motives may earn us praise from people, but followers of Jesus should seek applause from heaven, not earth. Our motives depend on our center. When Jesus is the center of our lives, our service is centered on the heart and mind of God. Paul’s words align with Jesus’: “. . . Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:3–5 NIV).

From the beginning of God’s communication with humanity, the message was clear. He was to be the center of life, providing the foundation for biblical servanthood.

- **In Genesis**, the Tree of Life stood at the Garden's center (Genesis 2:9), symbolizing that life flows from it to those who partake.
- **To Abraham**, God said, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless” (Genesis 17:1 NKJV). While God spelled out his promises in other encounters with Abraham, here God places expectations on him to live a life worthy of their covenant relationship. These words do not mean Abraham was sinlessly perfect, but they imply that God expected him to center every aspect of his life around honoring the Lord. God was to be the center of all.
- **To Moses**, God laid out how Israel should camp, with their tent doors facing the tabernacle, which housed the Ark of the Covenant. This arrangement ensured no tribe was farther from the center than another.
- **To Israel**, the command was clear: “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3). Israel was to worship God and serve him only. When confronted by the devil, Jesus affirmed, “You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only” (Matthew 4:10).
- **To the Church**, Jesus declared, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37).
- **In Revelation**, we see imagery of Jesus, the Lamb, standing amid heavenly scenes (Revelation 5:6; 7:17), symbolizing his central role in eternity.

It is evident from these examples that the Bible teaches humans to serve God. In the Old Testament, Joshua proclaimed, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). Paul celebrated the Thessalonian converts because they “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Paul often referred to himself and other Christians as “servants” or “slaves” of Christ and God (Romans 1:1; Ephesians 6:6). Peter echoed this in 1 Peter 2:16 and 2 Peter 1:1.

However, as servants, we are not meeting a need that God has; he lacks nothing. He owns everything, and he does not need our supply. Acts 17:25 states, “And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else” (NIV). So, while we serve him, it is not because he lacks anything. He chooses to use us as the visible expression of his kingdom.

Matthew recorded Jesus’ words, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24).

When we think about serving money, it does not mean meeting the needs of money; rather, it is about prioritizing our plans and efforts based on money. There are many whose focus

in life is on what they think money can provide them. In contrast, serving God means aligning our plans and efforts for the benefit of others while trusting in God’s promises for us. Our lives revolve around positioning ourselves under the waterfall of God’s blessings, seeking his greatest benefit—God himself!

God invites us into his service, not because he needs us, but because he desires us to play a part in accomplishing his purposes. He achieves his goals by providing us with the grace to do the work for his glory and for our joy. That is the purpose of his world—his glory and the joy of his people in him. Peter encourages us to serve hospitably without grumbling and while using our gifts, recognizing that everything we do should bring praise to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:9–11).

Serving people who are kind and generous and with whom we agree might be easy. But God calls us to serve in every situation, even to submit to harsh masters (1 Peter 2:18). This attitude demonstrates a changed heart committed to serving others. And when we serve, let us do so with joy, as the Psalmist said, “Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing” (Psalm 100:1–2 NKJV).

According to the Bible, service is not a means to achieve greatness; service is greatness. Jesus himself exemplified this when he said, “Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45 ESV). Our sacrificial service is not about gaining promotions or recognition; it is about embracing the paradox Jesus taught, where true greatness comes from serving others. When our actions reflect this understanding, all glory will be directed towards God.

Christian service ultimately represents the ministry of the risen Lord Jesus among and through his people. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Jesus gave his life for us so he could live his life through us. When we receive this truth, we can truly serve as Jesus did, and our lives will have a far greater impact than if we had used them solely for ourselves. While some are more concerned about “lording over” others, it is our service that leads. Let us embrace our calling to serve and not “lord it over” (Luke 22:25) to illustrate the kingdom principle of service as centered in Jesus.



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Suggested Reading: **Max Depree, *Leading Without Power***