

and socially for Christ (1 Pet 4:1).

Questions to think about:

1. Make a list of all the ways you feel you have suffered while serving the Lord.
2. How did you feel at the time? Did you give up?
3. How did you overcome your difficulties and problems?

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Being a servant requires a high level of spiritual qualities. As we continue to serve the Lord, let us constantly examine our hearts so that our faith and service will be approved by the Lord.

Lesson 5

The Gospel of Mark Servant Qualities

Listed Scriptures

Hag 2:11-14; Lk 12:41-48; Ac 6:1-6; 1 Cor 3:5-15; 4:1-2; 1 Cor 12:1-11; 2 Cor 11:23-28; 2 Tim 2:20-22; 1 Pet 4:1-11

Lesson Aim

To enable students to understand the necessary qualities we should possess as faithful servants of God

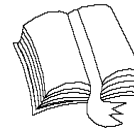
Memory Verse

And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." (Mk 9:35)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Mark 6-10

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Please refer to the Bible Background section in Lesson 4 for additional information on the Gospel of Mark (Lessons 4, 5, and 6 are Bible studies based on the Gospel of Mark).



“The Lord Jesus has called us to serve”

- What is your understanding of this?
- How do you feel about serving others?
- Is it difficult or enjoyable for you?
- What motivates or deters you from serving others?

Part 1
*Qualities
of a
Servant*



As we get to know the Lord, we will learn to appreciate His love more and more. We will want to give Him something in return. How can we repay God’s love for us? The way to repay Him is to live for Him. Living for Christ begins with learning to give. When we give ourselves fully to the Lord, He will use us to accomplish His great purpose. We will become instruments for His use. But as in any job, there are certain requirements that we should have in order to serve God effectively. Today, we will continue to study the qualities required of a servant of God.

A. Love and Compassion

It takes a lot of love to serve God, His kingdom and His people. Only with love can we sacrifice ourselves and our money, time, and energy. This may seem very easy, but to love not in words but in deed and truth takes effort and practice. God did not just say that He loved us. He demonstrated it through sacrificing Himself upon the cross.

Sometimes we think that by loving and sacrificing ourselves to others means giving up our lives and dying as a martyr. Maybe we think that loving God and others is like taking a \$1,000 bill and laying it on the table – “Here’s my life, Lord, I’m giving it all.” But the reality for most of us is that God sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there. Usually giving up our life to Christ isn’t glorious. It’s done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. Jesus Christ demonstrated this throughout His earthly ministry (Mt 15:29-31). As the time for His death drew near, the

Lord and His disciples headed towards Jerusalem. On the way, He told His disciples what was to happen to Him. "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him; and after three days He will rise." (Mk 10:32-34)

As the Lord and the disciples passed by Jericho, two blind men cried out to the Lord to pity them. What would we have done if we were in the Lord’s shoes? We probably would have felt that our mission ahead was too important to bother with such trivial matters. The Lord, however, was willing to stop and care for the needs of these two blind men whom others scorned, despite the important and heavy mission ahead of Him. He put aside His personal agenda and asked them, “What do you want me to do for you?” These are the words of a servant ready to serve his master. The Lord then touched their eyes, showing that He cared enough to do something for them, even though He could have simply healed them with a word.

We can thus see that no matter the time or place, the Lord Jesus would lay aside His own needs to serve the people by teaching, healing or preaching. He showed the ultimate love by seeing our spiritual needs and laying aside His heavenly throne to come to the world to die for us. In our busy lives and schedules, to what extent are we willing to lay aside our own immediate needs and time for others? Are we willing to stop and see to the needs of our family and friends? Oftentimes, we are too focused on ourselves to take time out for others. We need to learn from our Lord Jesus who took the initiative to see to the needs of others, and we need to offer our services willingly.

B. Holiness

In the Old Testament, the Levites and priests were people who were set apart from the common Israelites to serve God. Before they offered sacrifices, they had to wash and purify themselves.

In the house of God, there are many vessels of high and low value. In order to become a vessel for noble use, we have to first cleanse ourselves from sin. We must learn how to discipline ourselves, preserve ourselves from evil (2 Tim 2:20-22), have a clear conscience (Ac 20:33-34; 1 Sam 12:3-5; Eccl 12:14), and constantly increase in spiritual knowledge and keep our spiritual fervor.

Why is it important to maintain holiness while doing the Lord's work? In Haggai 2:11-14, the prophet Haggai asked the priests, "If a person carried consecrated meat in the fold of his garment and that fold touches some bread or stew or some other food, does it become consecrated?" The answer was no. Haggai then asked another question: "If a person, defiled by contact with a dead body, touches one of these things, does it become defiled?" The answer was yes. In the Old Testament law a person who was ceremonially "defiled" or "unclean" was not permitted to approach or worship God. In the same manner, those who wish to serve God need to be holy otherwise they will ruin the holy work. God also will not work with those who are unholy (Josh 7:11-12, 25; Heb 12:14; Gal 5:19-21). If we are not holy and serve God, it doesn't matter what position we hold or how much effort we put in—our work will not be accepted by Him.

C . Humility |

In the Bible, there are many characters who were used mightily by God. These great workers were not successful because of their talents or leadership qualities. Instead, many were called by the Lord because of their humility. In Amos 7:14-15, the prophet Amos openly revealed that he did not come from a prophet's background. He was a poor man who cared for sycamore trees and whose fruit was a food of the poor. Despite his humble background, God used Amos by asking him to travel to the worship centers of Israel where the rich idled and to proclaim God's condemnation of their distorted values. From this example, we see that God's criteria in using people are independent of background, worldly education or expertise. His work does not depend upon human wisdom and knowledge, but upon simply obeying His will and serving in humility. How can we cultivate humility?

- a.** Humility comes when we realize just how insignificant we are. We are but sinners, yet we have a chance to serve the Almighty God and Creator of the universe (1 Tim 1:12-17).
- b.** James 1:17 tells us that "every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights..." Since all gifts, abilities and opportunities are given by God, what have we to boast of? Let all glory, honor and praise be to our Heavenly Father (1 Cor 4:7; Ps 115:1).
- c.** Phillipians 2:3-8 reminds us that we should consider others better than ourselves. Each person has his or her own flaws and merits. However, a common tendency is that we compare our merits with others' flaws. When we do this,

we actually have grounds to be proud because we are better than others in some areas. If, on the other hand, we compare our flaws with others' merits, we will have no grounds to be boastful. Furthermore, if we compare ourselves with the Lord Jesus, we will have absolutely no reason to be proud. Thus, we need to learn to admire and appreciate others' merits. Only then can we maintain a humble attitude (1 Pet 5:5, 6).

D . Ready to Face Difficulties and Challenges |

While working for the Lord, the apostle Paul faced many difficulties and trials. Despite the numerous times he almost lost his life, Paul did not try to run from these hardships or threaten to quit serving. Rather, he faced these challenges head on. In his letter to the young Timothy, Paul encourages him saying, "As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim 4:5). If we want to work for God we must always be ready to accept and deal with challenges. What kinds of challenges will we face?

a. Challenges within ourselves

As servants of God, our primary goal is to please our master and carry out His will. This often means laying aside our own will and doing what God wants rather than what we want. Obeying God's will and sacrificing ourselves for others is often painful, as it is contrary to our natural tendency. In fact, according to Paul, our natural self is "hostile to God" (Rom 8:7). When we want to sacrifice ourselves to love others, our flesh tells us to care for our own needs instead. When we want to give more of our time to help brothers and sisters, our flesh tells us that we need the time to do our homework or spend the time shopping instead. When serving God and men, we have to overcome our own wishes and ambitions. We have to put God's command and the needs of our brothers and sisters as our first priority. This may be a struggle at first, but with determination and God's power, we will learn to serve with joy.

b. External challenges and suffering

Another kind of challenge that we may face while doing church work is external challenges. This may include pressures from the environment and from the people around us. Apostle Paul faced many such external challenges. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul gives an account of all that he had to deal with: dangers from travelling, to persecution from the Gentiles and his own countrymen. Peter, however, encourages us that "since Christ suffered for us in the

flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (1 Pet 4:1). Suffering trains us to rely on God's strength. God wants us to serve Him effectively, and He trains us through suffering so that we are purified from the ignoble.



Part 2

Servanthood-Other Considerations

A. Use Our Gifts

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of the different kinds of gifts that are used to help the church function effectively. The gifts were not to cause division, jealousy or rivalry among the believer, but "to equip the saints of the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12-13).

Each of us is given different gifts and talents to help and serve others (1 Cor 12:11). Such gifts may have been bestowed upon us when we were born. For example, some of us are born with a high aptitude for music or language. Other gifts are given when we ask in prayer (1 Cor 14; Eph 4:12), while still others are given by the laying of hands (2 Tim 1:6). No matter how we receive the gifts, it is God who gives them to individuals to complete the work set before them: Joshua was given leadership qualities to continue with Moses' job of leading the Israelites (Deut 34:9; Num 27:18-20); John the baptist was given the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the people back to God (Lk 1:14-17); the seventy disciples were sent out to work, and God gave them authority to preach, heal the sick, and cast out demons (Lk 10:9; 17).

a. Recognize our gifts

We should look into ourselves and try to know and identify our own qualities, strengths and abilities. There's no secret formula for discovering our spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts don't always show themselves right away; some are obvious while some are developed over time. We should try our hand at doing all kinds of work and see where our strengths lie and where God works with us.

b. Do not belittle our gifts

One of the items in Ripley's Believe It or Not is a picture of a plain bar of iron. It is valued at \$5. The same bar of iron has a far different value, however if it is fashioned into different items. For example, as a pair of horseshoes, that same bar could be worth \$50. As sewing needles, it could be worth \$5000, but if used to make balance springs for fine Swiss watches, it could be worth \$500, 000.

The above illustration reminds us that the raw material is not what is important. What's important is how the raw material is developed and used! Sometimes it may seem as if our special ability is too small or insignificant. Or we may feel our contribution will not amount to much. However, we should imitate the little boy who came forward and offered two loaves of bread and five fish to the Lord. He placed all that he had, little as it seemed, into the hands of the Lord without any preconceptions and allowed the Lord Jesus to work with it. This is the kind of attitude that the Lord wants us to have regardless of whether we have five, two or one talent. So long as we have the willingness of heart, God can put whatever we offer to full use.

c. Do not compare our gifts with others

The church functions with many different kinds of tasks such as preaching, teaching, healing, nurturing, giving, administering, building and many others. Each duty is important for the smooth running of the church.

During the Apostolic time, the apostles found that their duty to preach the word of God was neglected because they had to serve tables (Ac 6:1-6). Also, as the food was distributed, some of the widows were neglected. The apostles therefore appointed seven members who were to be responsible for the task of serving tables, while the apostles could concentrate on preaching and prayers.

From here we learn that preaching the word of God and serving tables were both necessary for the church to function effectively. We cannot say that preaching the word of God is more important than serving tables, and that we should forget about eating and focus solely on evangelism. 1 Corinthians 3:8 says, "He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor." We need not be envious of each other's gifts or value one type of work more highly than others. What God requires of us is that we act according to the best of our ability.

B. Spiritual Cultivation

a. Why is spiritual cultivation important?

As we get involved in church work, spiritual cultivation is vitally essential. From the four Gospels, we can see the importance of these two aspects in the life of the Lord Jesus: “And in the morning, a great while before day, Jesus rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed... and he went throughout all Galilee preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons” (Mk 1:35-39). Amidst the Lord’s busy schedule of healing, preaching and teaching, He would often withdraw Himself from the crowd and go to a lonely place where He would have deep communion with God (Lk 4:42; 5:16; 11:1; Mk 1:35; Mk 3:7; 6:46). During His communions with God, Jesus Christ received the wisdom and the power necessary to carry out the will of the Father. From here we understand that there is a direct correlation between spiritual cultivation and effective service. The more we cultivate ourselves, the better we can serve God and vice versa.

In 1 Corinthians 9:27, the apostle Paul says, “I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified.” Paul here understood the importance of spiritual cultivation. Paul was a great worker of God, with many gifts and talents, but he did not fail to subdue himself. He understood all too well his own weaknesses and the evils of Satan’s work. We need to understand that just because we have more talents and do more work, it does not necessarily mean that we are closer to God or are guaranteed to be saved. We are saved not because of the work we do—we are saved depending on our self-cultivation. A person who only pays attention to divine work but neglects spiritual nurture might be rejected by God no matter how prominent his work may be.

b. Spiritual cultivation and service

Luke 10:38-42 records a time when the Lord Jesus was welcomed to the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. During this visit, Martha was busy receiving the Lord and in the process, became frustrated and upset with all the work. She complained to the Lord that Mary, her sister, was doing nothing to help her. Instead, Mary was just sitting, listening to Him talk. Sometimes when we neglect our own spiritual cultivation, we too might think, “How come I have to do all this work?” or, “The brothers and sisters have no love. They leave me with all the work.”

In a later visit recorded in John 12:2, we can observe a change in Martha. Here, Martha again is solely responsible for serving the Lord Jesus, but there is no further mention of her complaints. Martha has progressed in her faith. She was probably

reminded of the need to draw near to God and spiritually cultivate herself after the Lord Jesus said that Mary had chosen the better portion.

Mary too grew spiritually. In this instance, Mary takes a jar of nard, pours it on Lord Jesus’ feet and wipes His feet with her hair. Mary sat by the Lord’s feet and absorbed all that He had said. She was now motivated to offer her best to the Lord. What Mary offered was a service of love. She offered a jar of pure nard, which was worth a year’s wages. This indeed was a great sacrifice. She was able to deny herself because she spiritually cultivated herself. The love of God moved her to give of her best to God.

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1 How does not being holy ruin or affect holy work?
- 2 In what ways was Jesus Christ humble and meek?
- 3 What are the characteristics of the humble?
- 4 Why is it important to be humble?
- 5 How can we develop humility?
- 6 When we want to serve God, it is important to arm ourselves with the spirit of suffering. How have we “armed” ourselves to do holy work?
- 7 What are some inner and external challenges that you have encountered or are encountering at present?
- 8 Share how you discovered or developed your gifts or talents.
- 9 What other gifts would you like to pray for so that you can help the church more?
- 10 What can you do now to prepare yourself in becoming a useful vessel for the Lord?
- 11 How much time do we spend in spiritual cultivation?
What are some of the difficulties or obstacles that we face in our spiritual cultivation?

12 What are some of the symptoms that may result if we serve without spiritually cultivating ourselves?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Testimonies of Servanthood

On Love and Compassion

One sister's grandma had, for a large part of her married life, been physically abused by her husband. However, the grandpa later suffered from an illness that resulted in the amputation of his arms and leg. During this ten years' time, he was also completely bedridden. However, throughout the length of this time, the grandma continued to be by his side. She continued to love and tenderly care for him despite her past sufferings. What great love and forgiveness this is!

Questions to think about:

1. Reflect upon moments where we were able/unable to show an act of love to others.
2. What inspires us to give to others?
3. What prevents us from giving to others?
4. How can we increase in love?

On Holiness

There was a brother who went onto the internet to watch pornography one Friday night. The next day, he was scheduled to translate during Sabbath service. When he was up on the podium translating, a buzz sounded in his ear which he could not get rid of. The sound distracted him immensely. But as soon as the service ended and he stepped off the podium, the buzzing stopped.

Questions to think about:

1. What things may have a negative influence on us spiritually?
2. How are they damaging to our faith?
3. Compare your mentality when you serve God after doing something you know you shouldn't have done with when you serve with a clear conscience.

Ready to Face Difficulties

Once, thirty truthseekers from another church came to seek the truth in a TJC in Taiwan. The pastor of that other denomination was not very happy about this. He did not want to lose his members since each person paid around \$800 (Taiwanese dollars) per month for his salary. And so he hired some gang members to deal with Pr. X, our church pastor. One day, Pr. X was scheduled to visit one of the truthseekers. The truthseeker knew that the gang members were coming to sort out Pr. X and called to warn him. However, Pr. X had already left for the truthseeker's house. When Pr. X arrived, he saw an entire line of motorcycles and gang members with bats in hand waiting for him. Inside the car, the board member who had accompanied Pr. X was trembling with fear. Pr. X, however, thought, "If I need to fight, so be it," and he got out of his car. Turning to the gang members he asked them, "Is there a problem?" As soon as he said this, the gang members all fled for their lives. Pr. X had no idea why, but he guessed that God must have somehow frightened them off. Later, those truthseekers were baptized into our church.

Questions to think about:

1. What was the most challenging thing that you were asked to do?
2. How did you face your challenge?
3. What lessons did you learn from that experience?

On Knowing and Serving God With Our Gifts

During an IA election where a chairman was to be elected to replace the existing retiring chairman, an elder rose to address the audience. This elder knew that many would vote for him as the next chairman, as he was well qualified for the job. However, the elder recognized clearly what his gifts truly were. In his speech, he explained that God had bestowed upon him the gift of writing and that he hoped to devote the remainder of his time to write more books. If he became the chairman, he would not have the time to do what he was good at and what would be beneficial to future generations. He explained that if a hand is given the function of the feet, it can still walk, but it will feel uncomfortable, look strange, and it won't be able to walk for long.

Questions to think about:

1. List the talents that God has given you.
2. Do you think you have fully utilized your gifts for God and others?

On Spiritual Cultivation

An elderly brother in his seventies had been serving in the church for a period of time. Although he was a board member, he began to grow complacent. He criticized others and did little for the church. The local preacher, who observed this, he felt it was his responsibility to draw this to the brother's attention. So, during a house visit, the pastor courteously reminded the elderly brother of his contributions in the past. He also reminded the brother of certain aspects that he needed to improve upon. The brother thanked the pastor for his reminder but inwardly he was seething with anger. He thought, "I am much older than you and more experienced than you, what right do you have to teach me?" He decided that he would no longer do holy work. Later that evening, the brother was riding on his motorbike at around 70-80 mph, when all of a sudden he saw ahead of him, a huge figure dressed in white, holding a white stick. The elderly brother did not reduce his speed and as he came near the angel, the angel whacked him on the back with the stick. The brother fell to the ground and had to be taken immediately to the hospital. Later that evening, the pastor visited the brother in the hospital. He could not recognize him because he had been so badly injured. On seeing the pastor, the elderly brother wept bitterly and repented for his sins. After this lesson, the brother turned out to be a good worker of God.

Questions to think about:

1. From the testimony, what do you see as some of the dangers that may arise from serving without continuous spiritual cultivation?
2. Reflect upon a time when your service was affected because of a lack of spiritual cultivation.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Most of the apostles were men of lowly status and little education, but God used them to fulfill His purpose. The same holds true today; a man's worldly education and status has little to do with the degree of God's usage of him. God seeks those who possess spiritual qualities and are willing to give their lives to Him to accomplish His will.

Lesson 6

The Gospel of Mark Ways to Serve

Listed Scriptures

Mt 25:31-46; Lk 8:1-3; Lk 12:16-21; 2 Cor 9:1-15; Rom 10:14-15; Js 2:14-17; 1 Jn 3:16-18

Lesson Aim

To enable students to know the reasons and ways that we can serve

Memory Verse

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor 15:58)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Mark 111-16

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Please refer to Lesson 4 for additional information on the Gospel of Mark (Lessons 4, 5 and 6 are Bible studies based on the Gospel of Mark).

W A R M U P

It Matters



Along the coast of the vast Atlantic Ocean there lived an old man. Each day when the tide went out, he would make his way along the beach for miles. Another man who lived out far away would occasionally watch as the old man vanished into the distance and would later notice that the old man had returned. The neighbor also noticed that, as the old man walked, he would often stoop down to lift something from the sand and then toss it away into the water.