

Fil-Am Community Church  
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## CHALLENGE OF SERVANTHOOD

If I could define Christianity in one word, it would be the word servant. Because it's impossible for you and I to become a follower of Jesus Christ without first learning how to serve. In fact, service should be the word that defines our faith.

There are some tremendous benefits of learning to become a servant. In fact, it's only when you learn to become a servant that you become more like Jesus Christ. And so, serving makes you like Jesus Christ. And that's the whole goal of life for you and I to be come more and more like Jesus.

Serving also pushes you outside of your comfort zone. Because it can be a little uncomfortable. It can even be a little intimidating to do decide to serve. But it's only when you get outside of your comfort zone that you can really grow.

Being a servant definitely helps build or develop your character.

Saints please listen to this, God is far more interested in your character then He is in your comfort.

Servanthood is what we are going to spend some time on today, specifically the Challenge of Servanthood, how God raises the bar of servanthood throughout the New Testament.

**Mark 10:45 (NASB)**, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Now, think about this. If anybody had a right to say I'm here to be served, it would be Jesus Himself. The Son of God comes to earth and He could say serve me.

- ✓ I am the person you have been waiting on.
- ✓ I am your Savior.
- ✓ I am your Redeemer.

But in fact, Jesus didn't exert the authority he had within him, he humbled himself and came to serve others, even to death.

That's in one reason that many people didn't understand that Jesus was the promised long awaited Messiah, because they were expecting a Messiah that would

overthrow the Roman government set up court and have the people come in and serve him.

However, as said Jesus said I come to serve others. And to give my life away as a ransom for many. And of course, He did that through His death on the cross for my sin, your sins and the sins of the world.

And so, if that is the quality that marked Jesus' life, and you are I are to be followers of Jesus, servanthood should also be a distinguishing characteristic of our lives.

So how do we live this out?

That's what we are going to talk about today and see if we can't see how Jesus lived His life as a servant.

And I want you to see four actions that He took based on a the passage in

Philippians 2:5-11.

Jesus as a model of servanthood, let's read this and then let's extract some lessons from it.

Philippians 2:5-11 (NASB)

*<sup>5</sup> "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges."*

He took the humble position of a human and was born not in a palace, but chose a manger instead.

When He appeared in human form, He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Therefore, God elevated Him to the place of highest honor and gave Him the name above all other names.”

So if the goal of Christianity is to become a servant, then...

- ✓ How do we do this?
- ✓ What does a servant look like?
- ✓ What are the actions of a servant?

Albert Schweitzer said, “I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know, the only ones among you who will be really happy, are those who have sought and found how to serve.”

- ✓ Servanthood when done correctly **makes you happy**.

It’s the life that you were designed to live.

- ✓ Servanthood **creates harmony** in a relationship.

In fact, many conflicts are caused in relationships because we refuse to serve those who are closest to us.

This morning we are going to see how one small act of servanthood can have a ripple effect and actually change a city, change a country, and change a world.

I really believe that those who are not yet followers of Jesus look at us sometimes as Christians, and say, what is Christianity all about?

If we want to show them what Christianity is all about a good starting place is servanthood.

Think of it this way what would happen if every Christian lived a lifestyle of servanthood, do you think that would draw people to Jesus Christ when we live out our faith.

So how do we live this out?

Let’s look at four actions of a servant from the Philippians 2 passage. Here’s the first action of a servant and remember this is foundational:

## **1. Put God first in my life.**

A servant is primarily defined by who they serve.

So who are you going to serve with your life?

Saints don't fool yourself we all serve someone, the question is will we live a life serving others or our self?

It's similar to the sermon I preached a few weeks back called the Challenge of Generosity do we want to be defined by living closed fist (me, me, me) or open fist (you, you, you)

We are either going to serve ourselves, which a lot of people choose to do.

We live a life of selfishness, or we choose to serve God, and we live a life of godliness.

The answer to that question is dependent on who you serve.

**Luke 16:13 (NASB)** *"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."*

So you have to make a choice. Who is going to be the primary person you serve, or who is going to be the primary person you serve in your life?

When you put God in first place of in your life, you WILL learn that greatness is found through not receiving, but through serving, not by become more, but by become less!

Look at a time when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Remember that on this night just before Jesus was arrested, He spent all night praying in the garden.

- ✓ He could sense the shadow of the cross,
- ✓ he knew that it was right around the corner,
- ✓ He knew that death was eminent.
- ✓ He knew that He was going to be called upon to give His life as a ransom for many.

And so He prayed a very powerful prayer, found in Luke 22:42

**Luke 22:42 (NASB)**, *"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."*

Jesus knew that His death was going to be about the salvation of the whole world. However, he also knew that the death was going to be excruciating.

So He says to God, if there is any other way that we can do this, then let it be. Then maybe take this cup of suffering away from me. In fact he prays the same prayer three times, but then, notice how He submits to God's will.

He puts God first in His life, because He continues to pray yet, I want your will not mine.

I want your will not mine. What a powerful prayer.

- ✓ When was the last time that you prayed that in your life?
- ✓ When was the last time you said in your career?
- ✓ God, not my will for my career, but your will?
- ✓ When was the last time you prayed that for your relationship?
- ✓ When was the last time you prayed that for your marriage?
- ✓ When was the last time you prayed that in your finances?

Maybe there are some areas of your life where you need to put God first.

**Psalms 37:4 NASB**, *“Delight yourself in the Lord and he WILL give you the desires of your heart.”*

So the first action of a servant is to put God first in our lives. Here's the second action of a servant,

## **2. Protect our attitude.**

Protect my attitude. Because as you put God first in your life, He then starts changing you from the inside out.

So a servant is determined by who they serve. That's the action of putting God first. But then a servant is defined by the attitude displayed. The action of protecting my attitude.

Are you allowing your attitude to be controlled by external circumstances?

And that's the truth for most of us. Most of us allow external circumstances to control our attitude.

But the reality is, it's your internal response that can determine your attitudes.

If you have ever received an email from my work email there is a statement at the bottom that says “**Attitude is the Small thing that makes a Big Difference!**”

So your attitude is up to you. What attitude will you have?

When an opportunity to serve comes your way, will you respond with a proper attitude of a servant or with a selfish one?

According to our key verse today “Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though He was God, He did not demand and cling to His right as God. He made Himself to be a servant.”

He took the humble position in human form. And in human form, He obediently humbled Himself, even further by dying a criminal’s death on a cross.”

So if your attitude is going to be like Christ, you have to take the actions of Christ.

He took a humble position. Now, this idea of humility in this passage is that Jesus emptied Himself to any rights that He had.

He had every right to come and to be served. He had every right to come and take over as the Savior through a sword.

But He didn’t do that.

He emptied Himself and gave up His right for the service to others.

- ✓ That’s what humility is.
- ✓ That’s the key to effective relationships.
- ✓ That’s the key to making a difference with your life.

To not say this is all about me and my rights, but to empty yourself to humble yourself and to say no, it’s about what’s best for others.

It’s about what going to leave the greatest legacy. So He humbled Himself to a position as a servant.

Other people have looked at this passage and they have said well, this just implies that Jesus was weak. That Jesus wasn’t who He said He really was.

Because it doesn’t make sense, that someone who was the Son of God, who could have called upon legions of angels to rescue him would chose to hang on the cross and bleed every drop of his blood for us.

It's the person of strength that can willingly submit themselves to somebody else's will.

Jesus always controls his attitude, as he determined what He wants to do.

It can be the same with us, submitting yourself to God's will is not an act of weakness. It is the ultimate act of strength!

The **first** enemy of serving, can be thought of as the enemy of **selfishness**.

Because a lot of people don't serve others because they are too selfish. They don't have the strength to break outside of their own box of their own little world view.

But you see, when you have strength and you willingly submit yourself, humble yourself to serve, what you are doing, is you are overcoming selfishness.

The **second** enemy that you overcome when you choose to serve is the enemy of materialism.

Materialism will strangle you if you let it. Materialism will keep you weak because materialism says life is about getting more.

It's about having more stuff and more things, and just getting, getting, getting and getting.

But it's the strong person who breaks that bond of materialism and realizes that life is not about what you get, but life is about what you give.

We talked about this a few weeks ago in the Challenge of Generosity.

Then it's also the strong person who humbles themselves and overcomes the third enemy of attitude, which is the enemy of **narcissism**.

Narcissism is the pursuit of gratification from vanity or egotistic admiration of one's own attributes.

The term originated from the Greek mythology, where the young Narcissus fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool of water.

Where you live your whole life just trying to look good in front of others.

Saints when you humble yourself, you are breaking that bondage of narcissism.

And instead of being worried about what others think of you, you now no longer care about what they think, as long as you are serving.

Jesus faced all of these, yet He protected His attitude. He put God's will above His own will.

He gave up all things material to accomplish all things spiritual. He did that willingly. Even submitting Himself to the humiliation of the cross.

He descended into greatness.

When you look at the lives of a servant, you see positive fruit. You see fruit that lasts. You see a life that is worth imitating.

The next verse is one that should be familiar to all of it, it is sometimes referred to as a checkup from the neck up.

**Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)**

*<sup>22</sup> "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."*

Now, we are going deal with this in the next couple of weeks if we have this kind of fruit in our lives.

However, I want you to understand that if you want your life to bear good fruit, you have to first start by understanding that you need to be a servant.

So let me ask you. When you are called on to serve, when you see an opportunity for service, when you see an open gap, do you step in and humble yourself and serve other people, are you quick to do it, or are you resistant.

Do you fall back into narcissism or selfishness or materialism?

Or do you willingly descend into greatness and drape a serving towel over your arm and get down and do what needs to be done?

Don't blurt out your answer but just think about it today,

If you came in today, at Fil-Am Community Church, and you saw that there was no chairs set up in the cafeteria, or the bibles or bulletins were not passed out, would you step up to the plate and start setting up or helping out?

Or would you say, or at least think, that it was somebody else's responsibility.

If you came in and there was trash on the floor and it was making the way down the aisle difficult for some other people, would you be quick to get up and to take care of that or once again say that's not my responsibility.

The choice is always up to you. Will I serve, or will I continue to live a life of selfishness?

Will I develop my character through servanthood, or will I stay inside of my comfort zone and continue to act out of my own weakness?

It's going to be up to you. Would I develop the good fruit of the spirit by protecting my attitude?

The next step we will discuss today is...

### **3. Plant daily seeds of love and kindness.**

These actions of servanthood that you have every day can be thought of as seeds that serve others.

Albert Einstein said, "Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile."  
And a life that is lived for others is a life that multiplies in IMPACT.

Just like a little seed can produce a lot of fruit, so a small act of service, a small action of loving kindness every day can bear much fruit.

In fact, Jesus Himself is the ultimate example of this. Because one man died for many. So His one action of emptying Himself, dying for us on a cross offers salvation to the whole world.

Jesus gave His life as the ultimate example of love and kindness.

**2 Corinthians 8:9 (NASB)**, *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."*

You see, as followers of Jesus, every day, you are given opportunities to help others.

- ✓ Will you accept those opportunities?
- ✓ Will you decide to not let a day go by where you live your life without serving others?
- ✓ Will you say when opportunities present themselves,

- ✓ I will plant seeds, seeds of love and kindness for the sake of the glory of God.

See, our ultimate goal as Christians must be to plant as many seeds with our lives as possible.

Because the Bible says that planting these seeds can produce a great harvest.

**2 Corinthians 9:6 (NASB)** *“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”*

So plant generously, with your life, every day planting seeds of love and kindness wherever you go.

The last point we will discuss today is...

#### **4. Pursue a lifetime of servanthood.**

It starts by taking these daily actions.

And at first, as you begin to you put God first in your life, then protect your attitude, and, and you plant these daily seeds, it can feel a little uncomfortable.

But as you continue to work through this, and you continue to bear good fruit with your life, you continue to become more and more like Jesus, it becomes a passion for you.

Because as Christians, we are called not to just occasional servanthood, but to ongoing servanthood.

A lifetime of service and this is how we become great in God’s sight. Notice our passage again.

Philippians 2:9-11.

*<sup>9</sup> “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges.”*

Jesus said it this way, "If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the good news, you will find true life."

In 1972, NASA launched the exploratory space probe Pioneer 10. According to Leon Jaroff in *Time*, the satellite's primary mission was to reach Jupiter, photograph the planet and its moons, and beam data to earth about Jupiter's magnetic field, radiation belts, and atmosphere.

Scientists regarded this as a bold plan, for at that time no earth satellite had ever gone beyond Mars, and they feared the asteroid belt would destroy the satellite before it could reach its target.

But Pioneer 10 accomplished its mission and much, much more.

Swinging past the giant planet in November 1973, Jupiter's immense gravity hurled Pioneer 10 at a higher rate of speed toward the edge of the solar system.

At one billion miles from the sun, Pioneer 10 passed Saturn.  
At some two billion miles, it hurtled past Uranus;  
Neptune at nearly three billion miles;  
Pluto at almost four billion miles.

By 1997, twenty-five years after its launch, Pioneer 10 was more than six billion miles from the sun.

And despite that immense distance, Pioneer 10 continued to beam back radio signals to scientists on Earth. "Perhaps most remarkable," writes Jaroff, "those signals emanate from an 8-watt transmitter, which radiates about as much power as a bedroom night light, and takes more than nine hours to reach Earth."

The Little Satellite That Could was not qualified to do what it did.

Engineers designed Pioneer 10 with a useful life of just three years.

But it kept going and going. By simple longevity, its tiny 8-watt transmitter radio accomplished more than anyone thought possible.

So it is when we offer ourselves to serve the Lord. God can work even through someone with 8-watt abilities. God cannot work, however, through someone who quits.

Will you step up today and take the challenge of servanthood.

- ✓ Putting God first in your life.  
Protecting your attitude.
- ✓ Being a willing servant.
- ✓ Planting seeds of love and kindness, and then
- ✓ Making servanthood a lifetime pursuit.

I hope you will take that challenge.

The Bible says Jesus is standing at the door of your heart and He's knocking and you have a decision to make.

Will I open that door of my heart and let Jesus come in and be my Savior and Lord, or will I continue to keep Jesus at an arm's length.

And I hope today that if you do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, that you will decide to open the door of your heart and let God come in and instead of just knowing about Jesus from this day forward, you will really know Jesus.

- ✓ You see, that's what salvation is all about.
- ✓ That's what forgiveness is all about.
- ✓ That's what spending eternity is all about.
- ✓ It's about a relationship with Jesus that begins now and lasts for all eternity.

In just a moment, we are all going to pray together as a church. And one of the opportunities that I am going to give you when we bow our heads is to begin a relationship with Jesus for the first time.

To decide to follow Jesus in a very real and personal way for the first time. If you are ready to do that, I hope you will pray that prayer with me in just a few minutes. Let's bow our heads and pray together.

Father, we thank you for the challenge of servanthood. And God, this week, help us to live our lives in the service of others.

If you are here and you do feel like maybe that God, in the only way that God can, is knocking at the door of your heart and you are ready to open up your life and get to know Jesus in a very real way, will you just pray this prayer right now? Will you say?

Dear God, I open up my life to you. I thank you for your love for me. I thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for me. And today, I claim your forgiveness and I ask you to forgive me of all that I have done wrong. Jesus, I invite you to come into my life to be my Savior, and to be my Lord, to be my leader. I want to follow you from this day forward. I want to live for you. I want to grow in

knowing you. Jesus, I am committing my life to you. Today, for the first time, I am receiving this new life and this new way of living.