

Fil-Am Community Church

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### **SERVING WITH PLEASURE**

*<sup>10</sup>Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. <sup>11</sup>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 forever and ever. Amen.*

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NIV)

Have you ever ridden a stagecoach pulled by horses? Of course, you don't see them anymore these days. Back in the old days of the west if you wanted to travel to California you had to travel by stagecoach and it was a long trip. There were three classes of passengers: First-Class; Second-Class; and Third-Class. One day a man went to buy a ticket to get on the stagecoach. He discovered that he could save substantially by obtaining a third-class ticket. So he bought a third-class ticket and saved money. He looked over the seats. The seats looked all the same. They had a cushion on each seat and he thought, "My! I've made a wise decision here." Everything went well for miles. All classes of people rode along in the same comfort; first-class, second-class and third-class. They were all the same. He rejoiced at his wise decision. The first-class folks were no better off than he was.

Finally they approached the base of a steep uphill road. The horses stopped. The driver jumped down from his high seat and opened the door and he said:

"First-class passengers, keep your seats. Second-class passengers, please get out and walk! Third- class passengers, please get behind and push!"

There were many steep hills and the trip was long and hot and dusty. And each time he had to get out and push. Finally he saw the wisdom of buying a first-class ticket.

I want to speak today about first-class Christians and third- class Christians because in my humble opinion we all ought to be third-class Christians, be willing to get out there and push.

Right now, you're all sitting there and I'm all alone doing the pushing here. That's fine. At this time, that is my job. But after this message, I hope that I have pushed you enough to say to yourself, "I just don't want to be a first-class Christian. I want to be a third-class Christian."

If you want to be a third-class Christian, someone that God can use, you need to know the essentials of becoming one. This morning, we're beginning a new series called "**Living for Jesus.**" In this series, we're going to look at what it means to live for Jesus. What it takes to live for Jesus. Today, I'm going to talk about "Living for Jesus means Serving With Pleasure." But service is a hard word because it is hard work. This morning, I'd like to share with you principles so that you can serve with pleasure. First, let us define Service.

What is service? The dictionary defines it as “an act of helpful activity.” It is something done to benefit others. It is an activity that is common to all. All of us serve in one way or another. We serve in our families, in our school, at work, in church.

Let me give you a few examples of service. This one is about a man who doesn't appreciate the kind of service he gets. He visited a marriage counselor and said, "When we were first married, I would come home from the office, my wife would bring my slippers and our cute little dog would run around barking.

Now after ten years it's all different, I come home, the dog brings the slippers and my wife runs around barking." "Why complain?" said the counselor. "You're still getting the same service!"

This one is about a woman who believes she is serving her husband well. One woman told another : "My neighbour is always speaking ill of her husband, but look at me, my husband is foolish, lazy and a coward; but have I ever said anything bad about him?"

And this one is about a husband's quite reasonable service request: From his death bed, the husband called his wife and said, "One month after I die I want you to marry Sammy." "Sammy! But he is your enemy !" "Yes, I know that! I've suffered all these years so let him suffer now."

Seriously now, if we want to serve, it must be an act of helpful activity. Christians actually define it as “Love in action.” Service must be motivated by love. In any case, let me give you the three essentials for effective service.

Let’s look at the first one:

## **I. I MUST HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST (MATURITY)**

First, what is the mind of Christ? The mind of Christ appears in 1 Corinthians 2:16 (NLT), where Paul says, “*But we can understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.*” In turn, this statement appears in a passage where Paul talks about the three types of man or woman—the natural man, the carnal man, and the spiritual man. All of us in this room fall under one of these categories. Meaning, you’re either a natural man, a spiritual man, or a carnal man. Let’s see what the Bible teaches about this then you can decide which category you fall under.

The natural man is someone who lives according to his adamic nature. Adam sinned against God, turned against God, rebelled against God. He disobeyed God and as a result brought death upon himself.

So, the natural man is someone who doesn’t understand the things of God, who doesn’t even want to be controlled by God. He does things his own way. 1 Corinthians 2:14 (AMP) says, “*But the natural, nonspiritual man does not accept or welcome or admit into his heart the gifts and teachings and*

*revelations of the Spirit of God, for they are folly (meaningless nonsense) to him; and he is incapable of knowing them [of progressively recognizing, understanding, and becoming better acquainted with them] because they are spiritually discerned and estimated and appreciated.”*

If you're honest, before you came to know Jesus, there were a lot of things in the Bible that you just couldn't understand. Like they were “meaningless nonsense.” You can't make heads and tails out of them. And many in the world today are in the same boat. Talk to them about the Bible and they shrug it off. They say that it's just all legends and myths, cannot be relied on because it was written by men and all that stuff. If you encounter someone like that, what do you do? Be patient. Remember, you were like that before. Don't go thinking, “He's hopeless. Why couldn't he accept what is clearly taught in the Bible?” Pray for that person. Pray that God will open his eyes and his heart.

Now, the spiritual man, contrary to the natural man, knows the things of God. It is because he lives his life, no longer in the natural way, but in the spiritual way, meaning, he lives his life in the power of the Holy Spirit. This person knows Jesus in a personal way and that's why he knows what Jesus is thinking. In short, the spiritual man is a Christian and he has the mind of Christ.

It doesn't mean that he can fully understand the thoughts of God but that he is able to discern and appreciate what God wants for his life. He is also able

to appreciate the Word of God. And all this happens because of the Holy Spirit who, the Bible says, is our teacher. 1 Corinthians 2:15 (NLT) says, *“We who have the Spirit understand these things.”*

Now, just because you’re a Christian doesn’t mean that you have the mind of Christ. I’m sure you know of someone who says he’s a Christian but doesn’t really act in a Christian way. In fact, he’s living like a worldly person. This kind of Christian is what is called the Carnal Man. The Corinthians were like this. Apostle Paul wrote to them and said that they were spiritually gifted but they were also immoral, selfish, quarrelsome, disobedient, fault-finders, etc. They are living a double life. He says in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NLT), *“Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to mature Christians. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. <sup>2</sup>I had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't handle anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, <sup>3</sup>for you are still controlled by your own sinful desires. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord.”*

I have three children, 6, 5, and a soon-to-be two-year-old. When they were very small, like a few months old, I always looked at them with a feeling of excitement and pride. Of course, I still do.

But when they were still tiny, I always wanted to cuddle them, to sway them in my arms, and it didn't matter if I didn't get enough sleep because it was just worth it. But if my babies acted like babies for the rest of their lives, that's a different story. If they didn't grow up, they would be more of a nuisance to me than a source of pride.

In the Philippines, we have this character called "Bondying." You remember him? That's how he looks like. He's a famous comics character. Movies have been made about him. Now, I don't know whether you want to cuddle a baby like that. "Bondying" is a grown man who really hasn't grown.

He is a man who acts in childish ways. And he speaks in a childish way. He is a man who still thrives on milk instead of solid food.

According to Paul, a Christian who doesn't grow spiritually is like a baby. He is someone who acts like a baby—fussy, selfish, quarrelsome, spoiled, etc. In short, this Christian hasn't grown up to shed off some of his worldly ways. I wonder how many of us are "Bondyings" here.

**Now, if you want to be used by God, you have to grow up.** You have to have the mind of Christ. You have to learn to be obedient, gentle, loving, peaceful, and have the fruit of the Spirit really growing in you. If you don't have the mind of Christ, you would never understand God and his Word. You would never listen to his voice, you would never respond to the gentle nudgings of his Holy Spirit.

A person with the mind of Christ has been transformed by the renewing of his mind, and he thinks as Christ thinks. He acts and reacts as Christ acts and reacts. He loves and overcomes as Christ loves and overcomes. A person with the mind of Christ can be used by God because he is in tune with God, in tune with the will and purpose of God for his life. Now, what category are you under? Let's be honest. Am I a natural man? Am I a spiritual man? Am I a carnal man?

## II. I MUST HAVE A HEART FOR PEOPLE

God has given Christians the life-long mission of telling the good news of Jesus Christ to others. Now, our mission has a twin. It is called ministry. A Christian is called not only to fulfill his mission in life but also to do ministry. To serve others.

If you're a Christian, you're called to serve others. When we serve others, we're serving God. The Bible says in 1 Cor. 12:5 (NLT), "*There are different kinds of service in the church, but it is the same Lord we are serving.*" It follows then that if we're not serving others, we're not serving God. We should serve others because our master, Jesus Christ, set the example.

And we cannot be greater than our master. He says, "*the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to **serve**.*" (Mark 10:45 NIV).

Now, how do we serve others? By using the spiritual gift or gifts that God has given to each of us. If you're a Christian, you have at least one.

But it is not easy to do ministry. Why? I think you'll agree with me when I say because it generally involves people. People can frustrate you. They can disappoint you. They can drive you nuts. That's why in the Peanuts cartoon, Lucy said to Charlie, "I love mankind. It's people I can't stand."

Paul the apostle himself experienced this problem. He was so disappointed with Mark that he didn't want to bring him along anymore in his missionary journeys. Actually, that became a sticking point between him and Barnabas until they separated ways, Paul going with Silas and Barnabas going with Mark. And, of course, we've heard of churches that split because of personal differences. Usually, it's little things that divide people. And no one of us I'm sure wants that to happen. God put us here for a purpose. God put us here to do ministry so that his church will be built up. The Bible says (1 Cor. 12:7 NLT), "*A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church.*"

If you're here this morning and you're a member of this church or you're thinking of becoming one, God put you here to use your spiritual gift for the benefit of this church.

So, what does it take to serve? **It takes a heart!** It takes genuine concern for people. The Bible says in Galatians (5:13 NIV), "Serve one

another...grudgingly.” Of course not, it says, “in love.” And it also says in Ephesians (6:7 NIV), “*Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.*”

Take note, to be able to serve, to do your ministry, in the midst of difficult people, what should be your mental attitude as the Bible says? Think of Jesus. Offer your service to him. You want to please him, not people.

Say, “Lord, I may not like this person, but because you told me to serve, then I’ll serve.” Then, follow it up with action. You see, feelings follow action. If you act, feelings will follow. If you rely on your feelings, you’ll never get anything done.

Reality is, there are Christians that don’t do ministry. Why? Let me give you one reason. Because they think that ministry is only for the minister. They’re partially correct. A minister does ministry. It follows, right? But to think that a minister is just someone who goes up to the pulpit and preach or conducts weddings and funerals or teach Sunday school is wrong. A minister is every member of the body of Christ. The word ministry comes from the Greek word which means “to serve.”

Another reason why some Christians don’t do ministry is that they feel inadequate. “I’m ordinary. I’m not as talented as Tita Tina or I don’t sing as well as Christine. Let them do the job.” But God did not call us to serve him in our own power, skills, talent. Truth is, God doesn’t need our help to

accomplish his work on earth. But he uses us anyway to teach us to depend on him. **God uses people who depend on him, those who are ordinary.** Even Paul recognized his weaknesses and acknowledged that it was God who enabled him.

He says in 1 Cor. 2:3-5, *“I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. <sup>4</sup>My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, <sup>5</sup>so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.”*

Still another reason why some of us don't do ministry is that we feel we're not properly equipped or trained. “I can't teach children because I don't know how to teach. I can't sing. I don't know how to lead small groups. I can't act.”

You know the obvious solution? Get trained. There are lots of opportunities to be trained.

In fact, this afternoon, we're going to have a training for Sunday school teachers and assistants. If your heart is in serving little children and the youth, come to the training. In the future, we will also have training for ushering and greeting and then for witnessing and a lot more. We'll keep you posted.

So, you don't have to be talented, skillful, rich, powerful, or anything to serve God although they certainly help. **Having a heart for people is what counts.** Learning to love them because God loves them. Putting away all our prejudices, biases, preconceived notions, or whatever.

So, to be used by God I must have the mind of Christ, I must have a heart for people, and thirdly,

### **III. I MUST HAVE A BODY FIT FOR SERVICE**

Let me tell you one truth. Your body is the only one you have. If you have another one, I envy you. Anyway, whether you like the shape of your body or not, you must accept it because you're stuck with it the rest of your life. Me, I'm contented with my body although I know it needs some improvement. Kidding aside, what I actually mean is that we should love our bodies and take good care of it because it is a gift of God. It was given to us by God to use for his glory. It was never meant to be misused, otherwise it loses its usefulness. It was never meant to be abused, otherwise, it breaks down and we ourselves suffer.

In 1995, Michael Jordan, the best basketball player ever, returned from retirement and rejoined the Chicago Bulls late in the season. He was, of course, eyeing another championship after two years of being in the baseball minor league. Did he accomplish his goal? No. It was because he was out of

the game for so long that his body was no longer fit to play the game. In fact, he committed a lot of errors during the games that he played. In short, he wasn't really of great use to his club whose members looked up to him with great admiration.

He let them down during that season. He wasn't as effective as before because of his misuse of his body for two years. But, of course, he came back the following year and won two more championships.

We, too, can let God down if we don't take care of our bodies. We can't be of use to him if we're not fit, both physically and spiritually. The Bible tells us that our bodies are "*temples of the Holy Spirit.*" ( 1 Cor. 6:19 NIV) The Holy Spirit resides in this body and so I must be careful in the way that I treat it.

Actually, I don't even own my body. It is God who owns it. The Bible says, "*You are not your own; you were bought at a price.*" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Since God is the real owner and I'm only a steward, what can I do to please the owner? This is what Paul urges us to do in Romans 12:1 (CEV), "*I beg you to offer your bodies to him as a living sacrifice, pure and pleasing. That's the most sensible way to serve God.*"

Paul is saying, "*Ok, you want to serve God? Then, make sure that your body is pure. Make sure it is pleasing before him. Make sure that you're not using it in a way that will bring disgrace to him.*"

Serving God with a pure body means using it as an instrument of righteousness and not of sin and uncleanness. The Lord demands holy service through holy lives and so we must watch our words, thoughts, and deeds.

The Bible says, “*Honor God with your body.*” (1 Cor. 6:20) How can we honor God with our bodies? First of all, when it comes to our relationships, let us be discreet and careful in our choice of friends and in the way we relate to them.

It doesn't matter whether that friend is a Christian or not but if that friend has lax moral values, he or she may be a bad influence to us and may lead us to situations that we'll regret later on. There are Christians whose lives have been destroyed because they were not careful about who they were going out with.

Second of all, let us be conscious of what we feed our bodies. The word “bodies” as used in Romans 12 means our whole selves, our entire beings, and that includes our spirit and minds. So, let us watch our diet, physically and spiritually. Avoid places that can cause us to sin like pubs, gambling dens, and the like and also avoid movies, shows, magazines, web sites, that excites the senses.

A story is told of Bud Robinson, the well-known Holiness preacher, who was taken by friends to New York and shown around the city. This was before Times Square was cleaned up. That night in his prayers he said, "Lord, I thank you for letting me see the sights of New York. And I thank you most of all that I didn't see a thing that I wanted."

Here in the States, pornography is big business. It is because it has a lot of patrons. Promise Keepers did a survey and they found out that 65% of men indicated they have a struggle with pornography. One researcher estimates that 60 million Americans have visited sexually explicit web sites. If you're one of those, let me give you a web site that can help you with your struggle and hopefully set you free from this kind of bondage. It is [settingcaptivesfree.com](http://settingcaptivesfree.com). It is a ministry by a reputable church. Don't worry. It is highly recommended by many Christian leaders.

That web site deals not only with pornography but also with homosexuality, eating disorder, alcoholism, drug addiction, smoking, and some more. There's like something for everyone.

Romans 6:13 says, *"Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And **use** your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God."*

Folks, after considering that God wants to use you and God has laid out principles in his Word to apply in your life in order to use you, what would you rather be? A first-class Christian or a third-class Christian? Would you rather sit and enjoy the ride or would you rather get into action and do some pushing? In this church, I'm sure there are certain ministries that would very much appreciate a little push. Amen? You can do your part by finding out what ministries need some pushing. Your little help can go a long way toward moving that ministry. For God's glory! Amen?

The kind of help you can give may be as small as folding the bulletins or as big as leading a home group. It doesn't matter. Everything is the same before the Lord. He knows what you are capable of. And he gives you the grace to do your ministry. Remember, **“I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”**

I challenge you and urge you this morning to be the minister that God wants you to be.

Let us pray.....