



Growing Through Serving?

John 13:12-17

Today I complete a series of five messages about "Growing God's Way." We all want to grow and bear spiritual fruit.

Spiritual Growth Covenant Card (take one if you need it). It is based on [Col. 1:10](#) *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,*

After today, we will have looked at five essential elements that are absolutely necessary to *Grow God's Way*. I did not invent them, God designed us around them.

(go over and emphasize 1st 4)

Just as big, delicious apples and pears and oranges are the results of a farmer who has invested in cultivating the soil and root system of his orchard, "spiritual fruit" are the result of a Christian cultivating the soil and root system of his soul. And those are the things that we have been talking about.

I really hope you will make a personal commitment to these things today. Then sign the card. You are making a faith-promise to God for the upcoming year. You will cultivate the soil of your life in order for God to produce the fruit.

When you turn it in, we will do two things. Laminate it for you and get it back to you. And I will pray for you.

Elmer Towns tells about a member of a motorcycle gang who was dramatically converted to Jesus Christ and the first Sunday after his conversion he went to church. Nobody in the church knew him and he walked down to the second aisle and sat in the seat. And the people kind of stared because he looked the part; big, burly, bearded, long hair, black jacket, tattoos.

As the service began the pastor got up and made an appeal for nursery workers.

"The assigned person was sick" he said, "And we need someone to work in the nursery today." No one volunteered.

He asked a second time, "We really need someone to go be with our kids." But no one would volunteer. And the cyclist prayed, "Lord, I love you and I want to do what you want me to do and if you want me to go work in nursery just have the preacher ask a third time."

And a third time the preacher said, "Please we need someone to work in the nursery." And the cyclist raised his hand, stood up and started toward the nursery. And immediately 20 mothers stood up, volunteering to work in the nursery.

What does it take for some people to volunteer to Serve the Lord? I submit to you that in this story, the only one who was serving out of love for the Lord was the motorcyclist. The others were serving something else.

Today we look at another of the 5 spiritual disciplines outlined on the Spiritual Growth Card to help us to become more godly, more like Christ. - ***Serving in at least one Ministry.***

I KNOW I've said it over and over, but EVERY believer should be serving in at least one area of ministry. If you're not, you are stunting your spiritual life, and it's even questionable WHY God has you here on earth?

Charles Spurgeon once prayed before his congregation, "Lord, we need labourers, not loiterers. ... The harvest can never be reaped by men who will not labour."

Today: Why Should We Serve in the Church? Because...

I. SERVING MAKES US MORE LIKE JESUS

This is fundamental. If you want to grow in Christ likeness, then being a servant must be tops on your list. Jesus said it numerous times in numerous ways -- Jesus came to be a servant, and when we serve we become more like Jesus. Period.

John 13:15-17 (NIV)¹⁵ *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*¹⁶ *I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.*¹⁷ *Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

Matthew 20:25-28 ²⁵Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸**just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**”

Luke 22:24-27 ²⁴Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. ²⁵Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? **But I am among you as one who serves.**”

Mark 9:35 ³⁵Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Philippians 2:5-8 ⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, **taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.** ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!

Are you getting this? There is nothing that makes us more like Jesus than when we become people who serve.

Do you ever wonder how you can become more like Jesus? One key thing you can do is serve as Jesus served. The work of the church is the work of God on the earth.

If Jesus were in our church, can you imagine that He would do nothing? Do you think He would serve or merely observe? Would He simply attend the worship service, perhaps give a little on occasion, and then leave? You know the answer.

II. SERVICE EXPRESSES LOVE FOR GOD

Serving in the church of God is one of the clearest manifestations of loving God Himself. The

writer of Hebrews reminded his readers that God would never forget the love they showed to Him by ministering to His people: **Hebrews 6:10** ¹⁰*God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.*

GOD’S LOVE LANGUAGE

Psychologists say that we humans have different *love languages*, meaning depending on who you are trying to love, they will sense your love based on their unique “love language.”

They talk of five love languages: *Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, Physical Touch.*

I did a online test to see which was my love language. I scored equally high on 4 of 5! Too bad for Nina, she’s got no clue what to do!

Well, I’ve got good news for you. God has a love language that you won’t have to guess at. **YOU SHOW HIM LOVE WHEN YOU SERVE HIM** and serve in his church!

Obviously, the church is not the only place to serve God.

- You serve God when you do your job as unto Him (Colossians 3:23-24).
- You serve Him when you give a cup of cold water in His name. (Matt. 10:42)

But serving Him through serving in His church is one clear way the Lord wants us to express our love for Him.

Some may try to serve God without loving Him, but no one can love God without serving Him. As Spurgeon boldly declared, *"He is no Christian who does not seek to serve His God."*

HOW IS YOUR SERVICE QUOTIENT?

1. Is my church STRONGER because of me?

Nutritionists speak of "empty calories." In order for these calories to be processed the body must use some of its nutritional resources, yet empty calories do little or nothing to nourish the body in return.

ARE YOU LIKE EMPTY CALORIES TO YOUR CHURCH?.

Do you receive more ministry from the church than you minister to it? God intends for every member of the church body to be served by it, and there are times when even the most spiritually mature members will receive more ministry than they

give. Nevertheless, the *goal* for each of us should be to serve in the church in such a way that it is stronger because we are there.

Everyone who really wants to, can do something to strengthen the work of the church.

2. Am I a CONSISTENT worker or a CONVENIENCE worker?

Too many people have decided that they will serve in the church only occasionally and when it's convenient. They are *convenience* workers rather than *consistent* workers. The church needs servants: people who will make real commitments and be dependable.

The classic example is a Sunday school or Bible study teacher. She or he prepares faithfully every week and serves God and others loyally and steadfastly. Of course, many other ministries require the same regular commitment. No church can be effective without people like this.

However, more and more leaders hear, *"I'll help out when I can,"* and, *"Call on me when you really need me."* That's nice, but realize this - no ministry of a church will function well with that level of involvement. The church needs people who will enlist and make a solid commitment, not people who will help only as last-minute reinforcements or if the battle won't last too long.

To quote Spurgeon again, *"We need labourers, not loiterers."*

3. Do I do a servant's WORK with a servant's HEART?

The reason some are unwilling to serve or unwilling to serve very long is that they don't have servants' hearts. Then when they are treated like servants—which inevitably happens to those who serve—they quit.

Every ministry becomes mundane or difficult at times. Every ministry is under-appreciated at times. Every ministry feels the sharp sting of criticism sooner or later. Every ministry sometimes seems barren of God's blessing. And unless in these times you can fall back upon the call of God to be a servant, you will become disillusioned and eventually walk away from every place of service you will ever fill.

2 Corinthians 5:14 (NIV)¹⁴ *For Christ's love compels us..*

You serve because you love God and he called you to serve, not because you're appreciated, loved, applauded, etc. That's nice, but it's not the bottom line.

NOT ALWAYS EASY

A missionary in Africa was asked if he really liked what he was doing. His response was unexpected. *"Do I like. this work?" he said. "Well. My wife and I do not like dirt. We do not like crawling into huts through goat refuse. . . . But is a man to do nothing for Christ that he does not like? God pity him, if not. Liking or disliking has nothing to do with it. We have orders to 'Go,' and we go because Love constrains us."*

Love for God makes a delight out of duty. It lifts even the most mundane ministry—whether overseas missionary work or service in the local church---out of the realm of repetitious responsibility.

Honestly, I love my ministry. But that doesn't mean there are moments when I, want to walk away from the ministry. *That happens to everyone who serves in the church,* whether vocationally or as a volunteer. Despite the discouragement I may feel at any given moment, I know there is no happiness in not serving Him. Remembering my call—that do it out of love for God—helps me maintain a servant's heart and stay faithful to my ministry in the church.

Roger Staubach is a former NFL Quarterback. He was once asked when injured, "How do you keep on keeping on when you're hurting.?" Roger said something important, "If you're not playing hurt, you're not playing football."

POINT: Serving is not easy, but it's worth it. But it does take a servant's heart and a love for God.

4. Have I RETIRED from Serving in God's Church?

Paul warned his readers in **2 Thessalonians 3:13**, *"But as for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good."*

Galatians 6:9 (NIV)⁹ *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

Why does he warn of this? Because it happens to all of us. Everyone tires of his/her place of service sometime. When year follows year, some are ready to say, "I'm tired. I don't want to keep on."

All of us need breaks, and there may be valid reasons to stop doing what we are doing, but that does not mean we are to do nothing! There is

always another way to serve! God does not put any of his servants “out to pasture.”

One pastor/author wrote of a woman who worked in the nursery of the church for 12 years. Then she “retired.” Perhaps she did need a break, but she saw it as permanent. She was done. However, in a few months, though, she volunteered for regular nursery duty again. This was what she said:

“I went to the adult class and received some wonderful teaching,” she explained. “Then I went to the morning worship service and received more wonderful teaching. The same is true for the evening service and Wednesday night. Finally it hit me that at most services, all I did was receive. The nursery program was the one main place in the church that I gave!”

Have you “retired” from serving? Don't quit serving when you are most qualified to serve. Don't lay aside your experience when it is most valuable. You may CHANGE how you serve, but never STOP serving.

Sometimes in the work world, because of a person's age, a highly competent, qualified person is forced to retire. Sometimes it's called being “put out to pasture”, a term taken from horses when they can't be ridden or raced anymore.

Don't put yourself out to pasture. Don't look for a rocking chair in the church.

Remember the REWARD of Serving

The glory of serving God is not so much WHAT you do, but WHOM you do it for.

We are serving the Living God, the Alpha and Omega, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Matthew 25:23 (NIV)²³ *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’*

CONCLUSION

What can you do if you need to start serving here at FBC?

- Talk to me. Let me know your heart and desire.
- Come to the Pastor's Class.
- Look for opportunities - they're everywhere.
- Take SHAPE Workshop when it's offered.

Do you want to be a fruitful Christian? I know you do.

Take these five “foundation stones” seriously and I believe you will become more fruitful, more like Jesus Christ...