

Servanthood

Previewing the Issue

A search on the internet for the following words produced these results:

Prestige	2,030,000 Results
Fame	5,150,000 Results
Notoriety	212,000 Results
Money	65,200,000 Results

A search on the internet for a less popular word produced this result:

Servanthood 27,000 Results

Enough said.

Probing the Scriptures

Jesus and his followers shared many times together. During these times, Jesus was always teaching. These followers (his disciples) were sometimes slow learners.

Read the following excerpts of Jesus' dealings with his disciples.

Matthew 17:22-18:1

As they were regrouping in Galilee, Jesus told them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed to some people who want nothing to do with God. They will murder him—and three days later he will be raised alive." The disciples felt terrible.

At about the same time, the disciples came to Jesus asking, "Who gets the highest rank in God's kingdom?"

Matthew 20:17-21

Jesus, now well on the way up to Jerusalem, took the Twelve off to the side of the road and said, "Listen to me carefully. We are on our way up to Jerusalem. When we get there, the Son of Man will be betrayed to the religious leaders and scholars. They will sentence him to death. They will then hand him over to the Romans for mockery and torture and crucifixion. On the third day he will be raised up alive."

It was about that time that the mother of the Zebedee brothers came with her two sons and knelt before Jesus with a request.

"What do you want?" Jesus asked.

She said, "Give your word that these two sons of mine will be awarded the highest places of honor in your kingdom, one at your right hand, one at your left hand."

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Mark 9:30-34

Leaving there, they went through Galilee. He didn't want anyone to know their whereabouts, for he wanted to teach his disciples. He told them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed to some people who want nothing to do with God. They will murder him. Three days after his murder, he will rise, alive." They didn't know what he was talking about, but were afraid to ask him about it.

They came to Capernaum. When he was safe at home, he asked them, "What were you discussing on the road?"

The silence was deafening—they had been arguing with one another over who among them was greatest.

Luke 9:43-46

While they continued to stand around exclaiming over all the things he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, "Treasure and ponder each of these next words: The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into human hands."

They didn't get what he was saying. It was like he was speaking a foreign language and they couldn't make heads or tails of it. But they were embarrassed to ask him what he meant.

They started arguing over which of them would be most famous.

Luke 22:14-24

When it was time, he sat down, all the apostles with him, and said, "You've no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this Passover meal with you before I enter my time of suffering. It's the last one I'll eat until we all eat it together in the kingdom of God."

Taking the cup, he blessed it, then said, "Take this and pass it among you. As for me, I'll not drink wine again until the kingdom of God arrives."

Taking bread, he blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Eat it in my memory."

He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant written in my blood, blood poured out for you."

"Do you realize that the hand of the one who is betraying me is at this moment on this table? It's true that the Son of Man is going down a path already marked out—no surprises there. But for the one who turns him in, turns traitor to the Son of Man, this is doomsday."

They immediately became suspicious of each other and began quizzing one another, wondering who might be about to do this.

Within minutes they were bickering over who of them would end up the greatest.

☐ Do you notice a pattern in the previous sections?

☐ Use the chart below to outline the sections.

Text	What Was Jesus' Focus?	What was the Disciples' Focus?
Matthew 17:22-18:1		
Matthew 20:17-21		
Mark 9:30-34		
Luke 9:43-46		
Luke 22:14-24		
Summary of All Texts		

Now read Jesus' answers to the disciples on "who is the greatest."

"For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest."

"Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave"

"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

"Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest"

☐ According to Jesus, what is the path to greatness?

☐ Do you believe this? Why or Why not? How has this worked in your life?

Perusing other Pages

Below is the transcript of a message on servanthood delivered by Steve Pearman...

Tonight I want to pick out three Servants in the bible to use as examples for our attitude to servanthood. I read last week a quote from someone who said, "God did not save you to be a sensation; He saved you to be a servant." I like that. I don't know who said it, but I wish a man called Diotrefes had heard it. You see, you can carry out ministry in two ways: you can reason, God called me to lead or heal or pray or pastor; and I'm going to show God and everyone else how good I can do it. Now doing your best for God is laudable. In deed, I would encourage every Christian to minister to the best of his/her ability, but there is a thin line that can easily be crossed; and Diotrefes crossed it.

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In John's third letter, Diotrephes is not commended! Why? Because he refused to give hospitality and told others not to be hospitable. If they did - he would turf them out of the church! What's going on here? Well, in the early stages of the church. An Apostle would start a church in an area, teach them for a while, set them up and then move on. They did not have full-time teachers, so itinerant preachers would go from one church to another. Of course, these would require hospitality during their stay.

Why, then is Diotrephes refusing to give hospitality to visiting teachers? Verse 9, I think, gives us the answer. John speaks of Diotrephes "who loves to be first.....and will have nothing to do with us." The visiting speakers were viewed by Diotrephes as a threat to his leadership. Maybe they didn't teach the things he wanted, perhaps they were better speakers than him, it could have been that he felt that they stole the limelight. But that's not what ministry is all about.

Ministry in Christ's church is about servanthood. Some people think that a good leader in a church is one who takes the helm and says to the rest, "we're going this way - and you are coming with me." Some people think that a good church leader is one who throws himself or herself into everything - taking all the meetings, planning every activity, being a one-man/woman ministry. But that's not being a biblically-based leader. A good leader will encourage others to get involved. He will train up others to lead. A good leader will quite often appear to be putting himself out of a job, because he is serving Christ and His people.

What does John say he will do to Diotrephes? He will expose him for what he is if he comes. You know, it only takes one person to stop a church from doing the Lord's bidding. One man. One woman. I have experienced the harm one man can do in a church. The work, witness, and worship of a church can be bound up because of a Diotrephes in the congregation. And I say, if we discover such a person in our church, we need to expose them for the sake of our heavenly Father. We are called to be servants not masters. Christ is the head, our Master.

In contrast, we note that John is writing to a man named Gaius. This man is an outstanding servant. He IS showing hospitality to travelling teachers (verse 5). He is welcoming strangers; and John describes him as walking in the truth. I think Gaius was a humble, gentle man who just wanted to serve Christ and His cause.

Jesus spoke often about putting yourself last. When you serve - don't make some big song and dance over it. Don't boast about what you've done because, in truth, it's not you that have done it - it's Christ who has worked through you. God knows what you do. You don't have to wave your arms to attract His attention. He will see your acts and will reward you.

Col 4v14. Paul talks about Demas as a fellow worker with him and with Dr. Luke. But later on in Paul's life, Demas did something that must have broke the heart of Paul. In 2 Timothy 4v10 we read Paul's words: "for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica." He worked with Paul - the great church planter, the apostle to the Gentiles. He could have done marvelous things for the sake of God's kingdom; but he abandoned it all. Why? Because he fell in love with the world.

Read with me 1 John 2v15-17: Loving the world means going after material pleasures, aiming for human goals, liking earthly things more

than spiritual things. To follow Christ and serve Him and for Him, you've got to give up loving the world. It's a different way of living. How do you know whether you are loving the world more than Christ? I think if you stop for a moment and analyze your decision-making, you will get a good idea where your priorities lie.

Here's some questions that might come your way:

- a) Do I stay in my warm home or do I go to the bible study?
- b) Should I attend the worship service or watch this great TV program?
- c) Do I tell my friend that I'm a Christian and risk being rejected, or do I keep quiet?
- d) Should I volunteer to help at Church and give up an hour of my valuable time?

You can go on.

Do you see what I'm saying? If you are scoring more times on the worldly side than on the spiritual side, come before the Lord and seek His help in getting your perspective right. Because it doesn't take much to become a Demas.

- * The world says "grab", God says "be willing to give".
- * The world says, "hold on to what you've got", God says "be quick to share".
- * The world says, "Get the best, the most, the greatest you can - no matter who you step on." God says, "develop your Spiritual gifts, and trust God with your life."
- * The world says, "an eye for an eye - give as good as you get." God says, "Forgive each other. If someone uses you, it's OK. You don't have to be their judge - I will."

Sometimes it seems as if the whole world is walking one way and we are walking in the total opposite direction. And it's a struggle...it really is a struggle. We get stepped on, hurt, used, abused, while we're giving, helping, teaching, serving. You and I have all heard that little voice that says, "Life's a whole lot easier if you turn around and go with the flow." You've heard that voice, haven't you? That's the voice Demas heard....and he gave in! And it can happen to anyone here tonight.

Acts 9v36: Tabitha (Dorcas). If ever you wanted a true example of servanthood, you should turn to Tabitha. Here is what Luke says about her in Acts 9: She was always doing good and helping the poor. She continually poured out goodness to others. Reading between the lines, we can imagine a lady who gave up her life in order to serve people. We know she was a follower of Jesus Christ. She wanted to love and serve others as Christ had loved and served her.

So she is giving great service to people and (verse 37) right in the middle of this, she dies. Her body was washed and placed in an upper room. Peter happened to be in a neighboring town, so they went to him and urged him to come at once. Tabitha was so loved by the people there, they could not imagine life without her. So they went to Peter and he said he would come.

They took him to the upper room where a group of widows stood weeping and holding the clothes that Tabitha used to make for them. They were honoring her. These widows were saying, "This lady loved us and served us. She gave of her time and energy for us. We didn't even own any clothes before she came, but Tabitha made some for us." Peter was so moved by this that he prayed and called Tabitha to rise. She sat up, and the widows were called in. It was as if God was saying, "You

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need a servant like this around you; so I'm giving her back to you." Tabitha made garments for needy widows. She loved and she served in small acts of kindness. She used her gifts to make them count for the sake of Christ.

What kind of servant are you - in your home, at work, with friends, in your street, around the church?

* Are you like Diotrephes - pushing yourself forward too much? If that's you, turn to God tonight and ask Him to break you, melt you, mould you, and fill you.

* Are you like a Demas - slowly slipping away from serving because of the glitter of the world, or because you just want the easy life that others have? If that's you, come to God right now and say, "make me strong. Give me the strength and the encouragement I need to serve you and your people well."

* Are you a Tabitha? How many people would stand round your death bed and plead for you to be raised because of the contribution you have made? That thought has certainly been on my mind the last few days. Would anyone miss my servanthood?

We need to bow before God and seek His help tonight. In a quiet, reflective moment, we are going to sing a song. Here are the words:

Father, I'm ready to serve You;
I bring my life to Your throne.
And all I have, Lord I give You,
take me and all that I own.

I know I've not been committed
to serve You all of my days;
but now Lord I just want to give You
my best endeavor and praise.

Processing Together

☐ Who is the most famous person you have ever met? When and where did you meet them? What happened?

☐ What do you think makes a person great?

Review the encounters with Christ and his disciples in the Probing the Scriptures section.

☐ What does Jesus say makes a person great?

☐ Does serving come natural to you?

☐ Can you think of a time that you did serve? How did you feel afterward?

☐ Why do you think it is difficult to serve others?

Read the following words that Jesus spoke of himself:

Mark 10:45:
That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not to be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for many who are held hostage.

☐ According to Mark, what was Jesus' life mission?

☐ Did Christ accomplish His mission? How?

☐ In what way were the many "held hostage"? By whom? Or by what?

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☐ How did Christ set those who were held hostage free?

Putting it into Practice

☐ Do you serve? How?

☐ Who in your sphere of influence could you serve tomorrow?

☐ How will you serve the following people next week?

◆ Your Spouse	
◆ Your Children	
◆ Your Friends	
◆ Your Co-workers	

☐ Spend this week filling out this chart.

Individual or Group	What is Their Need?	How Can I Serve?