

We Serve

What's up church fam, turn with me to [John 13](#). My name is Marcus and I'm one of the pastors here at City Church. And specifically I'm one of the lay pastors, which is a fancy way of saying that I work full time at UT, Go Vols. We almost gave it away but all that matters is that dub. So I work full time at UT as a senior graphic designer and I also care for our church on a part time basis in various ways. So if I haven't had the chance to meet you yet I would love to after the gathering. And if you go to UT, I work in the communications building on circle park, so feel free to look me up and let's hang out.

If you are new to City Church, we are in a series called Church Matters. And in it we've been talking about the **why** behind the things we do here on Sundays. And the reason we are doing this is because, if you've been around church for long, it's easy to go through the motions of a gathering and not understand the purpose behind the things done here on Sunday. So far in our series we've talked about teaching, singing, giving, and eating. And today we are going to talk about serving. Now let me say up front that serving encompasses more than just serving on Sundays and as a church we do that in several ways. But because of the focus of this series I will primarily talk about serving as it pertains to Sundays.

So a little of backstory from me, my dad was a deacon and my mom was a deaconess/secretary of my hometown church. They also had roles and responsibilities outside of that so we were always around church. And like them I too served in a lot of areas of the church. I played in the band. I was in the youth choir because I was a youth, not necessarily because I could sing. And I served on the usher team, think host team, but with black suits and oddly enough white gloves. Not sure why we rocked the white gloves honestly. Looking back it's kinda weird.

Now for those of you who grew up in church, I'm not sure if you have a similar story like mine, but when it came to serving, I didn't really volunteer as much as I was voluntold when to serve. We didn't have software that allowed you to say yes or no to being able to volunteer. Although I feel like that still wouldn't have really worked honestly. But I always knew it was something you were supposed to do but I never fully thought about why I served. So oftentimes when I served it felt more like a task, a box to be checked off, rather than serving because I wanted to. Essentially, I was missing the **why** behind my serving. Over time, not knowing the why made it more and more difficult to serve because just being told to do something is far less sustaining.

And I think that's how it works for a lot of us: if we don't think much about why we're serving, it's pretty easy to get burnt out on it, and eventually bail on it altogether. And I

believe the more you understand the purpose **behind** something like serving, the more you'll be empowered to endure and persevere in doing it over the long haul. And honestly the more you understand the **why**, you'll also be more joyful in serving. So that's what I want to spend a decent chunk of our time today.

Now I'll say up front, I don't really feel like I need to convince you to serve. And the reason I know that is because over 80% of our members here at City Church serve in some capacity on a Sunday. Which is amazing. Just so you know, that is basically unheard of in church world. So I don't feel like I need to twist anybody's arm to get them to serve with my teaching today. What I'd like to do instead is make sure we are remembering why we serve. So I've got 4 reasons I want to give you for why we serve and most of them we'll draw out of John 13 if you want to follow along there. Now with all that being said, here's the first reason for why we serve:

We serve because it needs to be done

And I'm getting that one from verses 4–5. Now for context Jesus and his disciples are eating what's often called the last supper before Jesus goes to the cross, so let's pick it up in verse 4:

4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

So before the last supper happened, Jesus, who was considered their teacher, and also who doubled as God in the flesh, decided to wash his disciples' feet. Now during this time, when transportation by sandal was the main source for transportation, as you can imagine feet got dirty. Real dirty. Think going hiking in chacos, in a dry and dusty place for many hours and the times that by 10. So, it was customary practice to wash the feet of the guests of the house. And it was often reserved for the lowest servant of the house to do said washing. So in our passage, Jesus, gets up from the meal, takes off his outer clothing, and wraps a towel around his waist, ready to begin the process of cleaning his disciples feet.

Theologian, David Guzik points this out in relation to this passage:

If Jesus wanted to just display the image of a servant, He would have had a servant or one of the disciples do all this preparation work. He then would have quickly wiped a damp cloth on a few dirty feet and consider the job done. That

would give the image of servanthood and loving leadership, but Jesus gave Himself completely to this work.

Jesus saw the need and took it upon himself to do what needed to be done. Instead of asking or even demanding a servant to do it, or his disciples, he lowered himself to do it.

Somebody had to wash feet, so Jesus said “I’ll do it.” He humbled himself fully to take the role of a household servant and wash his disciples’ feet. So for you and I, when it comes to serving, specifically in a church context, sometimes we get to serve in areas we feel really gifted in, in our wheelhouse. So if you’re a people person, maybe host team is where you serve. Or maybe you’re super talkative, which in case, host team might be good for you as well. Or maybe you have an ear for sound, so production is your bread and butter when it comes to serving. Any of that can be great, so long as we do it with humility. But other times—in fact a lot of the time—we just serve by doing things that need to get done.

Now, while it’s not quite washing feet, I’m gonna let you in on a little secret: a lot of people handing out bulletins here on Sundays don’t feel like they have the spiritual gift of handing out bulletins. And if we’re honest, a lot of people putting out parking signs don’t feel like they were given a passion by God for doing that. City Kids volunteers changing diapers probably don’t really feel like that’s what they were created to do before the foundations of the world. So why do they do those things? Because when you’re a part of a family, there are moments where you do what needs to be done. I think we can all relate to that on some level. We’ve all had to wash dishes, or clean our rooms, or houses when we don’t necessarily want to but we did it because it needed to be done. And it’s similar with serving. Sometimes you do things because it’s needed.

So we serve because it needs to be done. The next reason for why we serve is:

We serve because Jesus first served us

I get this from verses 12–17 and swing back around to verses 6–11:

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. 13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. [now pay attention here] 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, 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.

So the disciples saw Jesus as their teacher and as was the custom back in the day, they were to do everything that he did, like he did it. **Think of it like this, my grandfather was a brick mason and one of his sons, wanted to follow in his footsteps. So you know what he did, he watched everything my grandfather did and did everything like he did. Not exact, but similar techniques. And he ended up learning the business and was able to replicate and build on the foundations that my grandfather set for him in the field. And really he was able to take it to the next level. So my grandfather set an example for my uncle. So it's really similar to how the disciples would've seen Jesus. They were essentially his apprentices.**

So after taking the posture of a servant, Jesus says to them, “you’ve seen what I’ve done for you, now I want you to do that for others.” You’ve seen me feed thousands, you’ve seen me heal those who needed healing, defend those who needed defending, and more recently, you just saw me lower myself to wash your feet. You’ve seen how all of my life has been one of service. So I want you to follow in my footsteps. You won’t do the exact same things but you will be able to build off the foundations that I set.

In several other spots in the gospels Jesus hits similar notes on service as he did in verse 16. Here’s what he says in **Matthew 20:25–28**:

*25 Jesus 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. 26 Not so with you. **Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and 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.***

This is what Peter doesn’t get in verses 6–8. Listen to what he says to Jesus when Jesus is about to wash his feet:

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” 7 Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” 8 “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

Peter sees the Messiah, the king of the world, coming to wash his feet and his response is “nah Jesus.” You’re too good for this. You’re too holy for this. You’re not gonna wash

my feet. But then Jesus replies, “unless I wash your feet, you have no part with me.” Jesus is saying that the very way we enter into his kingdom is by allowing him to serve us, to wash us. Peter tried to stop Jesus from doing the very thing Jesus was sent to do. For us, the price of admission to enter Jesus’ kingdom is allowing Jesus to “give his life as a ransom” for us. So if at any point we think he is too important to serve us, or worse, that we are too important to take the posture of a servant, to follow in his footsteps, we’ve misunderstood the very core of his kingdom. Belonging to the kingdom of Jesus is about being served by Jesus, and then following in those servant footsteps behind him.

The next reason for why we serve is:

We serve so people can see Jesus

So I’m getting this from [verses 34–35](#).

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Jesus finishes this teaching by saying that if his disciples “love one another” (aka serve one another), there’s something about that that will draw people to the message of Jesus. People will “know that they are Jesus’ disciples” by that type of activity. So we say often around here that six days a week, we go out to our city with the message of Jesus. We’re essentially missionaries sent out from this place to our campuses and workplaces and friend groups and neighborhoods with the gospel. But one day a week, on Sunday mornings, our city actually comes to us. They show up at our building, and we get to play the role of host.

So how do we host well when a person who shows up here on Sunday doesn’t know where things are? I can think of two ways we do that here on Sundays. When it comes to serving on Sundays we can do it officially or unofficially.

In official capacity you can serve on the various teams that we have here on Sundays. The parking team is most often our first touch point for new people. If you remember what it was like to be new here, parking can be a little complicated. Chances are you might show up early, and, unless you are meeting up with someone or somehow you were able to drag a friend with you for moral support, then the first person you see will be someone from our parking team. So it really is a vital role in our church if you look at it through that lens. They are literally the first people new people come in contact with. What better way to serve than to be a welcoming face and presence for someone.

Host team, is also part of our front door and it's easier to see it that way cause there is a literal door you get to welcome people through. Just like it is with parking, you're helping break people's walls down as they enter. Whether that's being a welcoming face as they enter or being able answer any questions they might have it's helping ease new people in. It's being a good host.

For those considering City Kids as an area to serve, or if you are already serving, you are helping on so many fronts. On one hand you are giving parents the opportunity to focus on worshiping versus focusing on whatever their kid needs at any given moment. On another hand, you are displaying the gospel quite literally to their kids each and every Sunday. Through curriculum, songs, prayer their kids are being formed over time in seeing what it looks like to follow after Jesus. And when the time comes for them to desire to submit their lives to Jesus, you will have played an integral part in the process.

With production you are helping create an orderly worship environment for everyone and especially for those who are new. You are putting up lyrics in case someone doesn't know the songs we are singing. With sound, you are helping do all the eqs, and cutting out feedback, and anything else sound related, so the songs are sung clearly and sermons are spoken without distraction. So people can sing and listen and jot down notes without looking back at the booth and being distracted.

For those singing and playing instruments, you are helping lead our people and the people who come through these doors in songs towards the Lord. All throughout the scriptures you see God's people singing songs to him so having a hand in that can be so beautiful.

So that's serving in an official capacity. And if you are looking to serve you can actually sign up for any of these at citychurchknox.com. Now when it comes to serving in an unofficial capacity I feel like the sky's the limit, as the expression goes.

We've said this before from stage but we get to welcome in new people because we were once new and needed to be welcomed in. So unofficially this can look like showing up early or staying late to talk to new faces you haven't seen. In those moments, getting to know people's story can mean a ton to them. Being able to invite them to lunch or your LifeGroup afterwards can further make the appeal that church is not some event that you attend but a family that you belong to. So the more we welcome people into a family, the more they are able to witness this on display.

Author Rebecca McLaughlin, says her husband has three rules of engagement he operates by when they attend church gatherings and I think it's good practice for us as we look to serve others. Here they are:

1. An alone person in our gathering is an emergency.
2. Friends can wait.
3. Introduce a newcomer to someone else.

Other ways to serve unofficially is by just helping out when you see a need. Taking ownership when you see a need can be a really sweet way to love one another, specifically those on staff here. One way we've seen this done, and I know they were not expecting this, but some of our members saw the need for the top balcony needing vacuuming and so they took it upon themselves to do it. So if you sit in the balcony regularly, and noticed it being a little more cleaner, it's because someone saw the need, sacrificed their time, and vacuumed.

Alright I have one more reason to serve. And you won't find this in the passage; so think of it more from pastoral observation:

We serve because it's who we are

If you don't have a servant's heart, you won't be serving even when you are "serving." You'll show up, check the box, do the bare minimum and leave going "thank God I don't have to do that for another few weeks." But if you have a servant's heart, you'll serve even when you aren't "serving." It'll be in your bones.

A story that fits this very idea is one we've told before but I think it's a great illustration for us today. So Kent, attended a pastor's conference in Atlanta. And at this conference, about 30 of them got to go to a private lunch with one of the conference mainstage presenters. In their case the lunch was with a pastor named Francis Chan. This was right around the time his book *Crazy Love* came out, which was a massive hit.

But when it was over, pretty much every pastor in the room made a bee-line to go talk to Francis Chan, get a selfie with him, and I don't know what you do when you meet a Christian celebrity—get him to sign your bible or something? But all of them just got up, left all their food and trash behind at their table, and went all fanboy on your boy Francis Chan. And yes, Kent did fanboy a little. Not sure if he got his Bible signed though. Maybe ask him that after the gathering today.

But while everyone was waiting to talk to Francis, an older guy in a standard Chick-Fil-A employee's uniform, was going around and collecting the trash that everybody had left on their tables. It was a little bit weird because Chick-Fil-A didn't cater the lunch. But later Kent was able to spot the guy's name tag, and in tiny letters just like any other Chick-fil-A employee's name tag, it read *Dan Cathy, CEO*.

The man who was picking up everybody's trash at this lunch was the CEO of Chick-Fil-A at the time. In case you're wondering, last I checked, which was this week, his net worth is somewhere around \$7 billion. Chick-fil-A was one of the primary *sponsors* at said conference. So Dan Cathy wasn't there at the lunch because his company catered it or because he was being paid to clean up after it—he was there because he was a special guest *of* the conference. He helped pay for it through sponsorship. So really, he was the only one at that luncheon who *deserved* to have a conversation with Francis Chan, and yet there he was, picking up everyone's trash while *they* talked to Francis Chan. **It's one of the best pictures I can think of where a person who had the status and position and authority to *not* be a servant, chose to take the posture of a servant.**

So when serving is in your bones, when it's ingrained in you, it's just what you do. Will you be perfect at it, no. Will you always desire to do it, no. But more times than not if it's ingrained in you, you will end up serving. So here's what I would say, if that's not you, if you don't feel like serving is in your bones, let me encourage you to pray to the Lord about wanting to be this kind of person. If Jesus is our teacher and Lord and served then we should strive to be like him in all ways and as you saw, Jesus served. It was in his bones. So pray for it to be the same with you.

So those are reasons for why we serve, and like we said earlier, these reasons can apply to all amounts of serving but we wanted to encourage you specifically when it comes to serving here on Sundays.

So as we close, and you can come on up, I want to end with some more encouragement from [Philippians 2:1–11](#).

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

By all accounts, the way our church family serves one another is remarkable. It reminds me of verse 4 where it talks about not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. That's what church is a family looks like, no cap. So as we serve, may we be sustained by remembering the beauty of what the Lord did for us. How he served us ultimately on the cross. How he humbled and lowered himself to put us back in right relationship with the Father. Let's allow that to be why we serve from here on out.

Let's pray