Serve the Lord
Rom 12:1-11

Today is Habit #6—**Serve the Lord and his church**. Serve God / serve people.

Have you heard of the **80/20 rule** in church life? It applies to most volunteer organizations. **20** percent of the people do **80** percent of the work.

> I asked Chat if this was still a thing—here is what I got!
>
> [SLIDE]

I have met with 3 *new families* in the last 6 months—who are recovering from some form of burnout. Who had an exhausting run of service somewhere else.

> In their own words, they each said something like this… *we just need space to get healthy again. I'm sure we will serve again but can we just get healthy first? To which I say… **100 %.** Take all the time you need.*

I never thought about it like this until now… but one of the reasons you should step up & serve (if you are not already) is to protect others fr burnout.

> It is an act of neighbor love to sub in for a nursery worker or Bible Study teacher… or serve on Stewardship Comm/or Deacon min. So that, it's not the *same people doing all the work* over and over again. *We are called to care well for one another by sharing the workload in the body of Christ.*

So, that's what we are talking about today.

Romans 12 gives us four motivations for Christian service.

1. Serving begins with worship (vv 1-2)
2. Serving is for every Christian (vv 3-8)
3. Serving unites us (vv 4-5)
4. Serving is work (vv 9-11)

1. Serving begins with worship (vv 1-2)

The book of Romans, just like Ephesians, is both theological and practical. Chap 12 begins the more practical section of Romans… (theol << >> practice) From here to end of letter, Paul *appeals* to us to bring gospel into daily walk.

So, 12:1 reads…

In other words, the most appropriate / well considered / reasonable response to the mercy and grace God has shown you in Jesus Christ is to present yourself as an offering to him.

To present yourself in a sustained act of surrender/worship to the Lord.

I like how Doug Moo said it, "we offer ourselves not ignorantly, like animals brought to slaughter, but intelligently and willingly." A lamb, a pigeon, or a bull in the OT sacrifices had no idea what was happening to them. They *didn't know* that the animal in the stall next to them was leaving to die that day.

We are not dead animal sacrifices—we are living sacrifices!

We have purposefully and willingly chosen to trust in JX who is the ultimate sacrifice. He alone can make us **holy** / **acceptable** to God. Theme of Romans!

Therefore, we offer ourselves to God in an active response of worship and service… it is the most obvious response of a heart /soul made new.

NB: When we say **serving begins with worship,** we don't mean the Sunday morning gathering. This is something that happens daily / personally…

End of v. 1**:** **your spiritual worship** (ESV) = your reasonable worship

NASB = spiritual service of worship KJV = reasonable service

So, here is what we think Paul is after—the very first form of service any Christian offers to God is *presenting oneself to God in an act of worship (as a living sacrifice)*.

We *become* the offering before we *give* our offerings.

We present ourselves *to* him before we work *for* him.

2. Serving is for every Christian (vv 3-8)

NB—v 3 "**everyone** of you" // "**each** (one of you)" // "**individually**" (v 5)

Service is not just for the 20% who are willing to shoulder 80% of the work.

Serving the body of Christ is for every member / every member is necessary. That's the point of the **analogy of the body** in vv 4-5. We don't all have the same function. We need each other to function as a whole body.

If you are not an engaged body part, our church is not going to be who we ought to be. We each have different gifts; are each necessary; play a critical part…

Read v. 6ff

Now, I think that is **the most obvious reason** for why serving is essential for every single Christian. But there is another reason. A more internal reason.

In fact, Paul opens with it… it has more to do with *who we are* than our spiritual gifting or the talents he has given us. It is built in to v 3.

Do you see it? What is it?

PRIDE—thinking too highly of yourself.

One of the most important motivations for Christian service is to **train yourself toward humility and away from pride.**

> When you choose to serve God, by serving others, you're taking out the trash… of pride / self-glory that accumulates weekly in your own soul.

This is the transformation of the mind and heart Paul's talking about in **v. 2.**

Don't be conformed to this world's relentless pursuit of self-glory, power, ego, and self-love // of drivenness and building your own kingdom.

The world has trained us in this and wants to keep us **conformed** to its ways.

3. Serving unites us (vv 4-5)

In the most practical sense. When we work together as his body—as eyes and ears / as the arms and hands of Jesus Christ—it unifies us.

We live into the reality that God has already made true about us: he brought us together in X / fitted us together in his body / he assigned our places (v 5). He has gifted us. *So, when we **actually** serve together—as his people—we are living into a reality he has already made true of us.*

For example:

[SLIDE] Fall Festival pics

These are not just pictures of the Fall Festival last Sunday.

When **Paul Langston** was working the photo booth, he wasn't just taking pictures… he was *welcoming* people and *caring* about them.

When **Jess and Mary Ann** were serving popcorn, they weren't just serving popcorn… they were taking *interest* in people.

When our **Mel**, **Li Hao**, and **Siyuan** were doing the cake walk, they weren't just giving out candy.

The **Mary's** and the **Pizza** Crew were not just giving out pizza slices.

There was a lot more happening at the Fall Festival than you might have seen.

God was unifying us as his people / for his kingdom purposes.

Creating a solidarity in us / creating a culture of hospitality and peace and openness. Something inviting and compelling. A place where people are seen, like Theo of Golden sees them… who they could be by God's grace.

This way more than bounce houses and costumes and candy.

Our fall festival is not just another community event. Another cog in the wheel of the program-driven church. May the Lord protect us from that! Seriously.

4. Serving is (a good) work (vv 9-11) **read v. 11**

Instead of inactivity, passivity, and laziness, believers are called to be diligent and responsible workers. Don't be slothful. But **burn with zeal** and energy to serve the Kingdom!

Be fervent **in** spirit or **by** the Holy Spirit… we are not sure which (both!)

I like where **Tom Schreiner** lands on this… *Believers are to burn in their spirits, but the means by which this happens is the Holy Spirit (665).*

CLOSE: I want to close by coming back to the **80/20 rule**… and say this:

I don't think that rule describes us here at the Cave. I see a church family that is skewing the data in the healthiest of ways! We are way beyond 20%. I don't know what the number is for us but we have a high level of engagement among our members. Let's keep leaning into… **invite others further up/ in**!

So, here us my **appeal** to those of you are who not fully engaged in the life of the church. And it is not based on the 80/20 rule.

Instead, **I appeal you by the mercy of God**—by the mercy to shown to you in Jesus X—to present yourself *to God and to others as an act of true service*. To give yourself away. To take on responsibility for God's glory & your own good.

Here are some ways to get involved…

Go on the next **mission trip**
Host a **small group** at your house (Like Joyce T.…)
Join the **Community Life Center** (that place is happening…)
Be a driver for the upcoming **RAKE & RUN** … bless some
Put **SERVE ROA** on your calendar for next year
Get involved in **Upward Basketball** this year

Or here's one… get to know a new person in your section of pews… and invite them to lunch. Get to know them. Then, when they have a need or a crisis, you can step toward them and help us care well for one another.

It just takes a small step toward one another.