

Talk It Over

I AM A SERVANT (Week 4) Who Am I Serving?

SMALL TALK

1. Were you ever called to the principal's office? For what?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Joshua 24.** What heading would you give 24:1-13? What heading would you give 24:14-18? What heading would you give 24:19-27?
3. What were some of the highlights of God's faithfulness in Israel's history that Joshua recounted? Where would they be without God's help?
4. Based on all that God had done, what did Joshua ask the people to do?
5. How did the people respond?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. Looking back over your life so far, can you see any special time in it when God made a difference? How?
7. Are there other gods that you have been tempted to serve? (money, power, affection, addiction, leisure, security, certain people in your life, other...) How do you resist these temptations?
8. Frankly speaking, are you really serious about serving the Lord? If so, how do you show it? Was there a symbol or symbols of your covenant commitment? (Compare and contrast Joshua 24:16-27 with the two major New Covenant symbolic ceremonies: Baptism, and Communion)

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

9. What difference in your life has the "I Am A Servant" series made for you, if any?

October 23, 2022

I Am A Servant: (Week 4)-Who Am I Serving?

We are by God's design his servants. When we live to please God, our Lord is honored and we are blessed. When we live as though our chief aim is to please ourselves, God is dishonored, and we dishonor ourselves as well.

The Self-Directed Life

- Self is on the throne of the self-directed life.
- Christ is outside of the life.
- Interests are directed by self, and result in discord and frustration.

In Contrast, The Christ Directed Life:

- Christ is on the throne, and Self bows in worship and seeks God's Will.
- God's revealed will and walking by the Spirit, is our reliable guide!

Unfortunately, it is quite possible to believe in God, and the Gospel of Jesus and live a Self-Serving life in disobedience.

A Self-Serving Believer

- **Self** is on the throne, and ...
- **CHRIST** may be in our life, but the Spirit may be grieved!
- Disobedient Believers harvest what they sow (Galatians 6:7-8)
- Unless we repent, frustrations escalate to fixations and addictions that **MASTER** us and wreak havoc on others and ourselves!

Such a self-Serving believers desperately needs to listen and heed the confrontation of Joshua to the people of his day!

*Joshua 24:15 (NIV) ...choose for yourselves this day **whom you will serve...***

This decision determines your trajectory and is as relevant today as it was then!

Who Am I Serving?

Before we jump into Joshua 24, here is some background information and context. Joshua was God's chosen successor for Moses. Moses was God's agent for setting God's chosen people free from Egypt. Joshua was God's agent for leading God's promised people into the Promised Land.

There was one major challenge. The Promised Land was occupied with many fortified nations. By the way, these nations practiced horrific worship practices. So horrific I choose not to speak about them in this audience.

Some people struggle with the ideas of God's judgment on these peoples. It is my opinion that we would not believe there is a judgment to come, if we had no pictures of God's judgment on Earth in history.

The book of Joshua tells how God's presence and power establishes Israel there as a nation. However, they still have a problem. The wicked nations were not completely rooted out, and now even this generation of Israel had been severely corrupted by the wicked practices of the world around them.

It all comes to a head in the last chapter of Joshua. As we read, consider this question: ARE WE American Christians TOO CASUAL in our relationship with God as a result of OUR constant exposure to our culture's values?

Joshua 24:14–15 (NIV) “Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. ¹⁵ But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

Do you see here how the words “serve” and “worship” are used interchangeably?

I. Serving God is WORSHIP

By the way, because serving God and worshipping God are so closely related that the gathering for worship is traditionally called “a worship service”.

The point for us today is to hear Joshua's challenge for ourselves.

I. Serving God is WORSHIP

II. FEAR of the Lord is foundational

Joshua 24:14 (NIV) “Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness....

“The fear of the Lord” is a major theme throughout the Bible.

Joshua CONFRONTED Israel because they have become too casual about their covenant commitment to God. Israel has lost their fear of the Lord. In what

way? They were bowing down to the false god's, and false ideas these wicked cultures believed.

IRONICALLY: They still believed they were God's chosen people in Covenant with Him, **and YET** they included many false practices and beliefs in direct disobedience. **This was a breach of covenant!!**

This is like being married, but treating your marriage as if your covenant vows are flexible enough to include mistresses and date other people. That also is a breach of covenant! This does not work for a marriage. Neither does this work in covenant with God! You cannot treat God with such disrespect after all he has done for you!

Probably the greatest problem facing the church today is that we have lost the concept of the "fear the Lord" and we have become too casual in our relationship with God.

"Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness..."

Possible Signs You That You Might Be Too Casual with God

- Have you become blind to intolerable idols of our culture?

Idols can be symbolic objects, crafted images to represent a god, as a focal point for worshipping a false god. But idols can be anything that becomes the object of your affection and devotion in a way that pulls you away from God.

A classic example of idolatry in Jesus day and in our day is "the love of money".

Our American forefathers knew that there is a pull within us to trust in money more than God, and to live for money more than for God, and to look to money for security, joy, peace and pleasure, more than in God. May it never be! So as a constant reminder they put on all of our money. "In GOD we TRUST". Does it work? You be the judge.

Matthew 6:24 (NIV) *"No one can serve **two masters**. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and money.**"*

Jesus taught people how to break the back of this addiction. Practice generosity. God blesses generous people so they can be even more generous.

- **Grace did not change this foundational attitude we must have. Have we let GRACE make us too casual with regard to obedience!! May it never be!**

*Philippians 2:12–13 (NIV) . . . —continue to **work out** your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who **works in** you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

- **We have become too casual with regard to prayer!**

Kingdom life is, after all, a personal relationship with God that comes by actually knowing God through an **interactive relationship, not just agreement in your head with propositional truths.**

- **We have become too casual with regard to church.**

It is a sign you are too casual toward God when you no longer do first things first, and you no longer “Seek First HIS KINGDOM and HIS Righteousness, but instead you seek first YOUR little kingdom, and your desires FIRST!

What does it say about us if we come to church only when we feel like it? GOD says: “do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing” (Heb 10:25)

- In this context in Hebrews, God tells us to encourage each other and spur each other on in our gatherings. So, take this as a kind and gentle “spurring each other on”. What does it say about us if we are habitually late to the God ordained weekly church gathering for the purpose of serving, worshiping, and honoring God? Constantly showing up late, or missing appointments with God does not honor people, why would we do this with God?

The point for us today is to hear Joshua’s challenge for ourselves.

I. Serving God is WORSHIP

II. FEAR of the Lord is foundational

III. **Only God is WORTHY of our WORSHIP**

Love God wholeheartedly! Throw anything out of your life that has become a distracting fixation! Only God is worthy of your WORSHIP.

*Joshua 24:15 (NIV) But if **serving** the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will **serve**, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.**”*

PARENTS: This is especially for you. “As for me and my household!” Dads! Listen! Model it! Teach it! Lead it! for your children! There are many postures of worship. Although standing in worship was more common than **kneeling, bowing, or lying face down** before God, I have a question for you since we are talking about becoming too casual.

When was the last time you Bowed down before God?

One day everyone will “*in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!*” This does not mean everyone will be saved. This means everyone will **KNOW** the truth. For those who wait till they have no choice but to bow, it will be too late. **Why not CHOOSE now before it is too late for you?**

Psalm 95:6–7 (NIV) Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if only you would hear his voice,

My Dear Lord Jesus Christ,
I humble myself and bow my knee before you. I worship and serve you as my Lord and Savior. I am your servant. I offer myself to you. I will serve, honor, and obey you. “*Here am I, send me.*” Amen!