

October 2, 2022

I Am A Servant: (Week 1)-Is It My Nature To Serve?

I grew up in a family of 7. I'm the 4th of 5 children. I have 2 sisters and 2 brothers.

As a child, I got in trouble a lot. My parents worked hard at teaching me corrective lessons when I was in trouble. They had to do this a lot. I usually did not remember these lessons. However, there was one particular lesson I still remember some 54 years later. What was it about that particular corrective lesson that still hits the mark? Here's the story.

I had disappointed my dad because of the way I was fighting with my little brother. My dad did not raise his voice. He did not spank me. And yet his words left a lasting impact, an impact not with immediate results, but with growing and lasting results.

It was one thing to say I should treat my brother better than that. But my dad went further than that. He gave me a glimpse into his childhood.

His parents split up at a time when that was rare. The poverty he grew up with was also rare and difficult because he was raised without his dad. In those days it was very difficult for a mother to be gainfully employed and raise her children and provide for them adequately. My dad told me that when he was not too much older than I was that he had to go to work to help provide for his family.

I learned that day that my dad, though still a child, stepped up to the plate to serve his little brothers as if he was himself a man. And what was I doing? I was only thinking of myself. My dad was asking me to grow up.

Today's topic is: **"Is it my nature to serve?"**

You might think that my story is an admission that **"It was NOT in my nature to serve."** But that's not accurate. I was serving, but I was serving my own self centered desires!

It's your very nature to serve; if you do not serve the right thing, you will serve the wrong thing.

Let's start with some definitions.

I. True serving is SELF-GIVING love

Mark 10:45 (NIV) For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

We will take a closer look at Jesus’ reason for coming to serve in a moment. For now I’ll say this: Jesus’ life defined true service. True service is self-giving love.

II. Counterfeit serving is “SELFIE” service

What is “Selfie”-Service? That’s when you try to make it look like it is self-giving love, but then you stop and take a selfie for others to see and appreciate, and it ends up being self-serving love, not self-giving love.

Watch out. Jesus warned about this kind of service.

Matthew 6:2–4 (NIV) “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Don’t do any service for the purpose of showing others. This “selfie” service isn’t self-giving love; it is self serving love.

Self-giving love in service to others is much more challenging than being a self serving person.

QUESTION: What makes it hard to serve others?

I think that the top two reasons it is hard to serve others are as follows:

1. Others. (Face it, some people are hard to serve.)
2. Ourselves.

If I’m brutally honest with myself, I need to reverse the order. The number one reason serving is hard is not others. The number one barrier is me.

Jesus proved that difficult people did not keep him from serving them even to the point of dying for them, and praying, “*Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.*”

III. SERVANT is our VERY NATURE

This is the main point of the whole series:

Jesus not only taught us to serve, he saved us so that we are able to serve God and people according to our "very nature" as human beings. We were created to serve, and saved to serve as Jesus himself served.

Let's contrast the way of the world, with the way of Jesus.

The way of the world is to be self-serving.

BUT Jesus taught something quite different, and it is counterintuitive.

Matthew 10:39 (NLT) If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.

Jesus challenges us to live life for him. To make sacrifices for him. To live a life of self-giving love for him. Who does he think he is—God?

Jesus challenges us to live a life of self-giving love for each other, and this too is for him.

Why is everything for him? Because he is the one and only Son of God. AND because he gave himself for you! He gave his life as a redemption price to bring us out of slavery to sin and death.

To refuse Jesus means we do not accept his invitation to be our Lord and master.

Certainly, serving Jesus as Master will be challenging.

However, serving Jesus as Lord and master is LIFE as it is meant to be lived. And he is the source of LIFE, as well as Life's purpose! He is the source, means, and purpose.

Jesus was saying, if you stop living for you and start living for me you will discover life as it is meant to be lived!

What is the context for such a mysterious and puzzling claim? Paul explains it well with the expansive bird's eye view. Actually it is the viewpoint of heaven. Are you ready?

Philippians 2:3–11 (NIV) 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 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 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.

Let's look again at 2:5-7

Philippians 2:5–7 (NIV) . . . have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, **being in very nature God**, . . . made himself nothing by taking **the very nature of a servant**, being made in human likeness.

Jesus became like us so that we could become a servant like him.

How did he do that?

Jesus took off the glory of his “very nature” as God to put on the glory of the “very nature” of humanity—a glory that was previously damaged by Adam and Eve, affecting all of us.

What is the glory of humanity? To truly love and serve God and people. This is what God designed us for and what he saved us for!

Why would Jesus do such a thing? Why would he set aside his glory and literally humble himself *by becoming obedient to death, even a death on a cross? Do you know what this means? It means...*

You and I are more sinful than we ever dared believe (and you and I cannot fix ourselves), but you and I are more loved than we ever dared hope.

This is the Gospel. This is good news.
Now let me illustrate this Good News with our Logo.



WHAT'S IN A LOGO (Full screen Illustration L1)

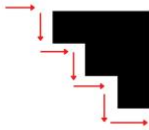
We have an obscure logo. Let's zoom in a bit.

(Full screen Illustration L2) I know it looks like a stealth bomber but that is not what it is. It reminds me of the upward life. Do you see how it is pointing up and



right? Raise your hand if you see that.

But there is also something else. The up and right arrow is the positive space, or positive shape. Do you see anything in the negative space, or negative shape? What is the shape of white space on the left side? Here I'll help

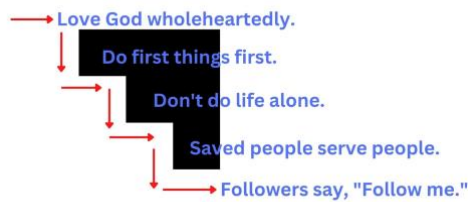


you.

(Full screen Illustration L3) Do you now see some steps? What I want you to see is that there are steps down that create the arrow up and right. The way up and to the right is by taking downward steps of greatness as Jesus did.

We just read how Jesus stepped, down, down, down in Philippians 2. We are told to have this same mindset. *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:

(Full screen Illustration L4) Jesus showed us how.

The downward path of greatness looks and feels difficult and anything BUT glorious! But heaven sees it differently! We read, THEREFORE, God exalted Jesus for his perfect obedience in humility.

Jesus loved you and me so much he was willing to take these downward steps. Jesus' love is what restores, heals, fills, with joy to the point of overflowing so we can serve others. If this is what you want, life in the design of our very nature. Here is a prayer for you today!

My Lord Jesus Christ,

- Thank you for restoring my “very nature” as a servant through your saving life, death, and resurrection. I bow my knee before you and acknowledge “*that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” and I worship and serve you as my Lord and Savior.
- I confess I still have trouble “valuing others above” myself. I still frequently look to my own interests, rather than the interests of others.
- Thank you for your forgiveness and washing me clean.
- Fill me with your love, and your life by the resurrection power of your Spirit placed within me.
- I am your servant. I offer myself to you. I will serve, honor, and obey you. “*Here am I, send me.*”

I pray this in the name that is exalted above every other name, the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!

Talk It Over

I AM A SERVANT

(Week 1)

Is it my nature to serve?

SMALL TALK

1. Can you describe some specific examples that make serving others difficult?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Matthew 10:39.** The world often teaches that serving yourself is the path to glory. Can you give an example of this kind of thinking? But Jesus teaches something quite different from that? In your own words what is Jesus describing, and how can this work? Can you think of any specific examples?
3. **READ Matthew 6:2-4.** How was this like serving, then taking a “selfie” and posting it for others to see? What was Jesus’ word for this? How is the kind of service that Jesus wants his followers to practice different from the “righteousness” the Pharisees practiced. How important is this? Consider Matthew 5:20 before you answer this question. What do you make of that?
4. **READ Philippians 2:3-11.** What did Jesus set aside to become in “very nature” a servant? How is this an example to be imitated by us (2:5)?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. How does Christ’s example of humility challenge our natural self-centeredness?
6. Which of Paul’s words seem particularly difficult to you in Philippians 2:3-8?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

7. VVCC’s 5 core statements are listed below. Jim described these in terms of our logo and as downward steps of humble service, that God honors and exalts. If you heard the message can you explain that idea in your own words?

