

## Life Group Leader Guide #19

7/30/17

### Service: Giving of Yourself

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Giving is often framed in material terms. When we talk about giving, our conversation is usually limited to things that can be seen, felt, or tasted, and our gifts are always tangible and quantifiable. Yet, perhaps the most valuable and loving way to give to others and to God is to humble yourself, giving of your time and energy in service.

Jesus is an obvious model of this kind of giving. We ought to sit back often and let ourselves be in awe of the way in which Jesus gave himself to humanity. We have often quoted Philippians 2 this year as we've discussed what Jesus gave up to become human and dwell among us, and this passage again speaks to this theme. Jesus, equal with God, gave that up, and chose to live his entire life in submission and service to others. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "He must increase, and I must decrease," but Jesus voluntarily decreased when He lived among us. He did take the form of a servant. His miracles were signs pointing to his connection with God, but they were all for the benefit of others: feeding multitudes, healing sick and diseased people, and taking time to teach and travel with his disciples. In John 13, Jesus demonstrates this idea by taking the form of the lowest servant, washing the disciples' feet. He did not stop there, however. He commanded his disciples that they were to do the same for one another.

Service is a form of giving because, in order to truly serve, we must be willing to spend time and energy for others that we would have otherwise spent on ourselves. Service is not tangible, and it is not quantifiable. It can be a thankless gift—many people serve tirelessly in various capacities, and receive nothing in return. Ultimately, service is not about the return, but the benefit to others. Regardless of what we get out of serving others, we know that they are blessed by what we do. We manifest the image of God by serving others, often with no thanks or recognition, as God does, and we rejoice in their well-being. This week, be encouraged to look beyond yourself to determine what you are capable of giving others in service. Remember that this comes from a place of love and not from selfish motives, as it does for God himself.

## **Discussion Guide**

You might begin by asking your group how last week's challenge went. Did anyone "clean out their barns" or look for things to give away? How did that feel?

Compare, then, to the feeling we get when we give of our time and energy... when we serve. *Read the following passages and discuss:*

- **Matthew 25:31-46**

1. In Jesus' great judgement scene, on what basis were the sheep and the goats separated? What was the primary difference between them?
2. In the actions of the sheep we see depicted a heart of service. How do they go further than simply giving of one's means and demonstrate more fully a heart of service?
3. What do you suppose keeps the goats from acting in the same way as the sheep? What keeps us from serving those named in this story... the sick, those in prison, the needy, the hungry?

- **John 13:1-17**

1. In a setting like this, how typical was it for the 'host' to wash the feet of his guests? Whose job would it have been?
2. What do you believe Jesus was trying to teach his disciples through this act of humility and service?
3. Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus washed the feet of Judas in this moment? This occurred before Judas left the group to go betray him. Knowing this, what does this say about Jesus' determination to serve ALL people... even those who betrayed him?
4. We are never more like Jesus than when we are "on our knees" (cf. humbly) serving others. Can you think of some ways that you can serve someone this week?

- **Acts 9:36-43**

1. In Joppa, Peter raised to life a woman named Tabitha (aka Dorcas). How had her life impacted others? What can you tell about her legacy from the scene described in the text?
2. Was Tabitha more known for her great donations of money or for her service? What does this tell you about her commitment to those in need?
3. What impact could you make in this community through leaving a legacy of service? What impact could this church make?

**Practice:** This week we simply challenge you to look for opportunities to serve in a way you have not before. Try something new. If you are unsure of what you might do, pray about it. Ask around. There are always needs around us, if we would open our eyes and see.