



# Growing as Disciples and Stewards

## Introductory Comments

Discipleship is living in and living out God's grace in Jesus Christ. Discipleship is the way we connect the dots between faith and life. The discipleship practice of serve is an extraordinarily meaningful way we can live out faith and make a difference in the world as followers of Jesus. As disciples, we live in the reality, joy, and delight of God's grace. The question before the disciple is how to respond to this wonderful gift of grace.

Serving God and neighbor is one such response. As we experience the healing grace and love of God in Jesus Christ, to serve, becomes a joyful and thankful response to God's love. As we live in God's love, that love compels us to love others as a grateful response for God's love for us. As disciples, we take our cue from Jesus. Both the gospels of Matthew and Mark remind us that Jesus came to serve and not be served, and that in serving we are to love others as he loved us. To serve is at the heart of the disciple. In other words, to live in and to live out God's grace in Christ is to serve in grace wherever we find ourselves in life.

To serve is a mark of discipleship and as growing disciples and stewards, serving becomes more than just the doing in response to a need, but a way of life that encompasses God's love in a way that, to serve, becomes the natural center of everyday living among our neighbors and in the world. In serving, the disciple makes a difference in a world that is full of need. Every act of serving, not matter how large or small, brings a measure of God's love into a life. One's act of serving can have a profound impact in a person's life. Serving brings transformation, justice, comfort, and hope into people's lives.

But not only that, serving can have a profound impact on a disciple. Very often, the one who is serving, comes away from that experience blessed in many ways. This is the dynamic present in growing as disciples and stewards. One's serving nurtures faith and an awareness of God's ever-present love in Christ. In that awareness, one grows in faith. And as one grows in their faith journey, one also grows as a disciple and steward.

# Bible Study



## *1 Peter 4:8-11, John 13:31-35*

One might describe the faith/discipleship practice of serving as love in action. For the disciple, “to serve”, is to live in and live out of God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ. Serving is a disciple’s active response of love for neighbor. It is the disciple’s response to God’s life transforming love in Christ. Both of our Bible study texts address serving as active love for God and neighbor, of living in and living out God’s gift of grace in one’s life. The “why we serve” is because of God’s love for us in Christ. It is a response of joy and duty to God’s love. The Bible study texts speak to this joy and duty. The joy is the heartfelt delight and gratitude for God’s love and grace in Christ. The duty is to love one another as God has loved us.

The gospel of John gives us the basis of our serving, God’s love. It is God’s love that provides “a new commandment” for disciples and stewards. Jesus says to his disciples, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another.” (John 13:34) Jesus speaks of serving as both joy and duty. The joy of living each day in the life transforming love of God and the duty of living out this grace by what we do and what we say in relationship to world around us.

The text from I Peter gives us instruction in how to serve as one seeks to live in and live out God’s love and grace. Peter reminds his readers of God’s giftedness, both in grace and gifts for ministry. With God’s love and grace undergirding the disciple and steward, serving is done in both word and deed. The question raised by our texts is very simply, “how does the growing disciple and steward live in the midst of God’s grace and bring this gift to bear in daily relationships and living?”

In both texts, God’s love is the foundation for understanding the discipleship practice of serving. For the growing disciple and steward, God’s love in Christ and our response to this wonderful gift is at the heart of one faith journey and what it means to be a disciple and steward of God’s grace. To serve is a way of life that seeks to be open to the ways in which God’s healing and comforting love can be shared with our neighbors and the world. Serving is all about touching lives with God’s love in Christ. So, how do you serve in your life as a child of God?

## Bible Study Discussion Questions

- How would you define what it means to “serve”?
- In John’s gospel, Jesus says, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.” He explains the why of this commandment by saying, “Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another.” How do you think God’s gift of love and grace informs our serving?
- I Peter sets out some basic principles of serving. What do you think are some defining characteristics of our serving as a response to God’s love and grace in Christ? How do you understand serving the needs of others?
- How do you understand serving God through our word’s, thoughts, attitudes, and relationships toward others?
- In what way would a heart of serving help one grow as a disciple and steward?
- In what ways have you engaged in the faith/discipleship practice “serve” this past week?

