

IDENTITY: WE ARE SERVANTS

family . missionaries . servants . learners

Questions for Personal Study

Read Mark 10.35-45. What are James and John asking of Jesus?

How does Jesus' response contrast with their request?

Read John 13.1-20. How is this action the "full extent of his love?"

How does John say Jesus is able to do this (v.3-4)?

Read 1 Cor. 7.23. Who are you a slave/servant of?

Do you see yourself as a servant? How does this Identity shape you?

Questions for Study in Community

Read Luke 22.24-27. What is the dispute over? Do we do this at all? How?

How does Jesus define greatness? How does it contrast with the world?

How does Jesus model what he is teaching?

Is this way of life "upside down" or "rightside up?"

Read John 13.1-20. What is Jesus teaching his disciples?

What activities are implied by our call to be "foot washers?"

Questions for Staying on Mission

As a Missional Community, how does our "Servant Identity" work?

How did you do at living our Identities out this week?

Begin to plan for the weekend of Oct. 4-5, a "Weekend on Mission."

On Gospel Motivations

Many people are "natural" servants - it just seems like they gravitate towards jobs that require little things done well. While that is great, we need to be careful that we define this Identity of Servant carefully so as to avoid making it sound like we are talking about personality styles. Sometimes, those who serve well do so for all the wrong reasons, ironically turning their serving into a means for greatness and an opportunity to get a pat on the back.

What we need is a humble confidence in God's sovereignty and his infinite care for us as revealed in the cross of Christ. Only by having a vision of the cross at the core of our lives will we be free to serve without thought for ourselves. We need the cross so that we can forget ourselves and serve one another in joyful seriousness.

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Who Are You?

Tonight we're continuing our series exploring what it means to be a part of the Church and our particular expression of the church, the Vintage Faith Communities. Above all, the goal is to remember who we are as a people originally created in God's image and now - in Jesus - created anew and restored to relationship with God. **We need to remember The Story of God and what He has done in history for us, come to a firm conviction about who we are because of what He has done, and then dialogue about how we should live in light of what He has done.** This series is about our Identity as God's people and how we embody that Identity together.

Over the last 2 weeks we've talked about our first Identities, Family and Missionaries. God has always desired a people - a human family - who would live together in such a way that the world would know what He was like. In Jesus, God has come to the world that he created to finally and completely create this people. The church is a community formed by the gospel, radically called to God as Father and one another as His family.

At the same time, this family that God has made in Jesus is a family with a purpose - or mission - in the world. In Jesus God is restoring all things to himself, remaking the world the way he intended it from the beginning. As his Family, we are sent into this world to join with him in restoration and redemption. We are missionaries, radically sent into our culture to demonstrate the redemption that God is bringing through Jesus.

Tonight we continue our study by looking at our third Identity, *Servants: We are servants of God who serve Him as we serve others around us.* Jesus came as a servant and demonstrated by his life and death what it is like to live in His kingdom. In his death he bought us out of slavery to self and into the glorious freedom of serving him by loving others.

Freedom to Slavery

In the beginning, when God created Humanity, they had everything they could ever want or need. God was their Father who fully loved and delighted in

them, all the resources of creation were at their finger tips, and they were given the glorious task to cultivate the world that God had made for the display of his glory. Adam and Eve were given God's word to govern them and teach them how to love one another and God. In this was the freedom to live as God intended them in humble service to him, to each other, and to the creation.

When Adam and Eve chose rebellion from God, they also chose to become slaves. The serpent's lie was that freedom would come by getting outside of God's rule and making a name for themselves. Like a goldfish "freed" by a toddler from fishbowl, this new freedom was slavery and death - a freedom we've been swimming in ever since.

Suffering Servant

Beginning with Abraham, God promised that one day he would restore his benevolent rule on the earth and extend his blessing to all people. Unfortunately, God's people interpreted this promise as their opportunity to be over and above the world. His people persisted in the lie that freedom would come when they were on top of the world. Throughout the Story of God, they prayed for a deliverer, one who would lead them out of slavery and establish them in the world. They hoped for a deliverer who would conquer their enemies and give them great victory in the world.

But God's plan was different. His promise to Abraham - that all nations would be blessed through him - was a call to service, not to domination. God intended that Israel would be a servant to the world, taking on the sin of the world through the temple sacrifices, as a sign of one who would later come to be the final sacrifice. God's plan was to send a servant, not a king, and one who would be conquered rather than conquer.

Jesus came as a suffering servant, sent into the world to bear the sin and evil of the world and thereby heal the world. Jesus gave up everything - his Father, his home, his glory - in order to make himself a servant, even to the point of death. He showed us greatness through becoming lowest, least, and last.

Freed to Serve

In Jesus' life and death he frees us from slavery to ourselves. We no longer have to be our own masters. We can drop the heavy burden of self-protection and self-promotion and come under the benevolent rule of King Jesus, the suffering King. He suffered for us, serving us to the fullest extreme, and thereby undermining our need to protect or promote ourselves.

When we place our faith in Jesus, we are transferred into his kingdom and given a new family and a new mission. We are adopted as children of God and sent into our world to bring healing and redemption. But Jesus has shown us the pathway or dynamic by which that healing will come. Only as we give up our lives for the good of others, absorbing the pain, evil, and brokenness of the world, will the redemption that Jesus has purchased go out into the world.

We Are Servants

In Jesus, we share in his Identity as Servant. To say that we are Servants is to acknowledge that Jesus has first served us. We have been served by the Son of God, the great Servant King. "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" (Mark 10.45). Jesus served us by not holding on to his rights as the Son of God and freely choosing to lay his life down in our place. He served us by becoming the ransom paid to free us from slavery to ourselves. He served us by becoming the way out of our self-sabotaging freedom.

The reason we fail to serve is that we don't know and believe what God has done for us in Jesus. When we fail to serve freely and joyfully, we are demonstrating that we still love ourselves and have not surrendered our lives to the one who purchased our freedom. We are revealing that we believe our wants and needs are more important than God's love to us in Jesus.

As Servants, we live in such a way that we surrender ourselves moment by moment to the will of our Father. We want to be ready and willing to do whatever is needed, whenever it is needed, wherever it leads us. We are no longer calling the shots in our lives, putting limits on how much we will serve or when we will serve or who we will serve. We have been bought with a price and we are no longer our own. We now must learn to hear his voice and respond in obedience as servants. We must cultivate a moment-by-moment dependence on His Spirit so that we remember who we are and discern how, where, and when - not if - to serve.

Jesus taught and modeled that real, abundant, joyful life only comes as we learn to give up our lives for the good of others. As long as we hold on to our lives in self-protection and self-promotion, we are forfeiting real, lasting, meaningful life! We have been freed from the tyranny of our own selfish desires in order that we might be conduits of grace to those around us. Living under his loving reign, we are freed to joyfully serve those he puts around us.