

## Back To Basics Part 5

This is the last message in our Back to the Basics series. I hope this series has been helpful to you as we've studied together about the bible, prayer, the church, tithing and giving, and this morning we are going to talk about our responsibility, our duty as servants and followers of Christ.

Let's review just a bit. When we receive Christ as our Savior and Lord, we enter into a new life. We are justified by his death on the cross, our sins are forgiven and we are born again into a new life in Christ. But it doesn't stop there, it only starts there. Jesus is now the Lord of our life. He places His Holy Spirit within us to help us grow in our new life. He wants us to grow in understanding God and his will for our lives. He also wants us to grow in holiness, becoming more and more like Jesus in our conduct, our character, our conversation, in every area of our lives. We have a responsibility to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as he works within us. The Holy Spirit help us understand and apply God's word to our lives. He helps us say no to sin and yes to God and his word. The Holy Spirit causes his fruit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control, to grow in our lives as well.

All of this kind of comes together in our lives. We know about God and learn more about him by studying the bible. But we don't just want to know about him, we want to know him, and we get to know him better, in relationship, through prayer. Bible reading and prayer, two of the basics.

I read something this week that John Stott had written regarding bible study and prayer. I thought this was really helpful. He said as you study the Bible, **“Look for promises to claim and commands to obey, examples to follow and sins to avoid....Above all, look for Jesus Christ. He is the chief subject of the Bible.”** Then in prayer, Stott says, **“Begin by speaking back to God on the same subject on which he has spoken to you. Don't change the conversation!”** Pray about what God has spoken to you from your Bible study. **“If he has spoken to you of himself and his glory, worship him. If he has spoken to you of yourself and your sins, confess them and repent.” ....John Stott** If he has spoken to you about his blessings, give thanks. If he has spoken to you about areas where you need to work, ask him for grace and strength to be faithful.

Pray and study God's word. Then connect to the church. Attend, get involved and in

doing so you gain the blessing of studying the bible together and praying together and for one another. There you receive the added blessing of being able to share your gifts and talents with others, you can bear each other's burdens, give and receive encouragement and support and help. In the church you can give financially through tithing and support missions and outreach as we talked about last Sunday so the work of the Lord continues through his church and you are blessed and at the same time you bless others. We do life together, growing together in Christ. You don't have to do this alone! But what's next?

This morning I want to look a little deeper at our Christian duty and responsibility. When we get down to the basics, our duty, our responsibility is simply to follow Jesus. Jesus said, **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."** **Matthew 16:23** We place Jesus above our own desires and follow him. That's what it means, denying ourselves, dying to self and following him. But how does following Jesus play out? What does it look like? It looks like service to God and to others. Gayle Erwin talks about the Jesus style of living as being a "servant-hearted" and an "others-centered" life. Jesus said, **"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 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 10:43-45**

Jesus came to serve. The bible says **"[Jesus] made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant..."** **Philippians 2:7**. Then Jesus said, **"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."** **John 20:21** As his followers we are to be servant-hearted and others-centered. That's our Christian duty. So what does that look like? Who do we serve?

**Serve God. Recognize yourself as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.** It starts right here. The New Testament writers opened their letters with that affirmation. **"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus."** **"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."** **"Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ"**. **"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ"**. Now we can add our names to the list. **Phil, a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.** \_\_\_\_\_ **a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

We are to serve God, submitted to his authority, surrendered to his plans, his purpose, his will for our lives. The attitude of our heart is to be "Lord, what can I do for you? How can I best serve you? How can I please you?" Our response to his calling is like the waiters at Chick-fil-a, "It would be my pleasure!" We have no higher calling or purpose in life than to serve God.

We are all his servants, each of us serving in different places, with different gifts and talents, with different opportunities, but all of us serving God. Home, school, work, church, neighborhood, anywhere and everywhere, we are servants of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Know that and recognize that about yourself. I think the first place we learn to serve, and maybe the hardest place to serve at times, is at home.

**Serve your family.** The Lord has set us all in families. Your family may be crazy, odd, dysfunctional, wonderful, funny, just plain peculiar or even somewhat normal. They may not “get you” and you may not exactly “get them”, but God has given us all a family. Maybe by adoption or birth, or maybe you just chose those people and called them family. Whatever the case, being a servant of Jesus Christ means we should serve our family.

At each stage of our life there is opportunity to serve our family. As servants of Christ we are to treat our family and love them as we would Christ. We honor our parents, parents love and nurture their children, we love our brothers and sisters, forgiving them and treating them as we want to be treated. If we marry, we are to love our spouse as Christ loves the church. Nieces and nephews, grandparents, cousins, you name it, we are called to serve Christ by serving the members of our family.

Marriage and family is under attack in our culture. No fault divorce, the redefinition of marriage by the courts and couples living together without the blessing of God through marriage has undermined God’s plan for the family. Divorce has brought devastation and heartbreak. Too many children are having to grow up without a dad or without a mom or without godly role models. We need followers of Jesus Christ who will step up and serve the family. We need couples who will honor their marriage vows. We need men who will do whatever it takes to please God and love your wife and be faithful. We need men who will be a Dad and love your children and raise them to know Jesus. We need women who will love their husbands and moms who will love their children and model what a godly women looks like, in modesty, in faithfulness and love. You want to be a minister? Minister to your family. Let it start at home! We need married couples who will be foster parents and adoptive parents and thank God for so many young couples in our church who are adoptive parents!

We need children and teenagers who will honor and obey their parents, who will submit to godly authority. You don’t live in a hotel, you live in a home. Your mom isn’t your maid, she’s your mother. Your dad isn’t your “old man”, he’s your father. The bible says “**Children,**

**obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ – which is the first commandment with a promise – ‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’” Ephesians 6:1-3** And parents, the bible says **“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4.** We serve the Lord well when we serve our family.

We need single people who will honor the sanctity of marriage by 1) keeping themselves sexually pure, refusing to have sex outside of marriage and 2) by actually marrying and refusing to just go along with the culture and co-habitat. We serve the family by obeying Christ and his word.

**Serve your co-workers and classmates.** How do we do that? First of all, we are to be like Jesus on the job and in the classroom. It’s often been said that we may be the only Jesus some people ever see. We can serve those around us by consistently and faithfully living for Jesus! Let the character of Christ be seen in your life: in your conversations and in your conduct. Someone is watching your life – live so they can see Jesus at work in you. That doesn’t just mean you don’t swear or tell dirty jokes. Nor does it mean you carry a giant bible to work and school with you and use it like a club to knock people down and then point out their shortcomings and sins. It means you are honest, that you are on time, that you work hard, that you are diligent in your work ethic. Nobody needs a lazy, incompetent, employee who tells everyone they’re a Christian and instead of doing their job they spend their time “witnessing.” They’ve already witnessed by their conduct. That doesn’t honor the Lord. You have a responsibility to your boss, to the owner of the company to do your job. The Message bible says, **“Work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you’re really serving God.” Ephesians 6:7.** You are working for God so act like it.

Friday morning I was invited to pray with a group of co-owners of a manufacturing company. What a blessing to hear these men pray for their employees and their families, to pray for their business that they would be faithful and have integrity. They prayed for their customers and those doing business with them. They have determined that they are going to honor God with their business and serve their families, their church and their community in the process. I believe God can honor that kind of business, don’t you?

Students, serve your classmates. Serve the Lord in your school. It means more than just

carrying your bible on top of your books. It means being kind to other students, even the ones that aren't so nice to you. It means being kind to the unpopular kids, speaking to the ones that no one speaks to, sitting with the unpopular kid at lunch because you figure that's what Jesus would do.

It means you are respectful of your teachers and the school property, of the other students and their property. It means you stand for what is right. You refuse to bully others. You refuse to just go along with the crowd when you know what they are doing is wrong. You live for Jesus because you are his servant and others will notice. Don't be afraid to stand up for Jesus and do what is right.

We are to influence and effect change among our co-workers and classmates by faithfully living for Jesus. We are to make our company, our school, our class, our workplace, better because we are there. Pray for your coworkers and classmates. Show them you care. Look for opportunities to show kindness, to bless them, to help them because you truly care. Be a friend. Be someone they can count on and depend upon.

**Serve your church.** I shared several reasons why you should be part of the local church two weeks ago. In fact, I shared reasons why you should be a part of this local church, so I won't go back over those things again. But allow me to say again, you need to be part of a church if you are a follower of Christ. He has already made you part of THE church, his body, but you need to connect to and be part of a local church. You need the church and the church needs you.

There are dozens of ways you can get involved in the life of the church, dozens of ways you can serve and share your gifts. Volunteer. Show up. Ask. Jump in.

**Serve your world.** How do we serve the world when Jesus said we were to be in the world but not of the world? We best serve the world by presenting Jesus to the world. Jesus said, **“You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”**

**Matthew 5:13-16.** We are called to be salt and light in our world. Salt is added to meat to add flavor and also to slow the decaying process. Light reduces and dispels darkness. Salt and light bring about change when they are introduced and we are supposed to influence and bring about positive change in our world as we let our light shine. The world is decaying and it needs salt, whether they admit it or not, to slow the decaying process.

From the beginning the church has been serving as salt and light, doing good deeds in the name of Christ. Feeding the hungry, caring for the sick and dying, caring for widows and orphans, visiting those in prison, ministering to the needs of refugees, victims of oppression, human trafficking, victims of disasters and terrorism, the church is there to serve and help. That's who we are. Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Servant hearted and others centered.

There are so many ways and opportunities to serve your world. They don't have to all be through the church or through a Christian organization. You can volunteer to work in secular organizations that serve the needs of others and you can be salt and light there. Jesus said, "let them see your good deeds." Don't hide your light but let it shine brightly for Jesus.

Of course, the most important part of serving our world is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. Jesus said, **"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."** **Mark 16:15.** Not everyone is going to be a preacher, but everyone is commissioned to go and tell others. Oral Roberts taught us as his students that the great commission meant to "go into everyman's world". Go into your world. The people upon whom you have influence, that is your world. Go to them and proclaim the good news. Tell them about Jesus. Show them Jesus.

Go and tell, that's what Jesus commissions us to do. Go and tell what you know. Just share your story. Tell them the difference Jesus has made in your life. Point them to Jesus. Invite them to church. Invite them to CAGY. Invite them to Wednesday night, to New Community. Invite them to come experience the life and love and forgiveness and joy you've experienced in Christ. Offer to pray for them, for some need they may have shared with you. Anyone can do that. Serve your world by sharing Jesus.

Another way you can serve your world and share Jesus is by giving to missions through the church. We regularly give you opportunity to partner with missionaries that are going to places you will likely never go. Give in a missions offering and help send others to go and tell people about Jesus.

In a few weeks I hope to give you opportunity to make a faith promise for missions. I'll tell you more about that in a few weeks, but all of us, single or families, rich or poor, we can give something to tell others about Jesus.

In addition, there are usually a couple of opportunities in the year to go on a short term missions trip. Perhaps you could go and share Jesus in another culture. But missions and serving the world doesn't mean flying to some remote locations, it is about taking Jesus to your

world, to every person's world.

This Christian life is about service. Serve God, serve your family, serve your co-workers and classmates, serve your church, serve your world. In all of this, do it as unto the Lord. This is our Christian duty, our responsibility as servants of the Lord. The bible says, **“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Colossians 3:23-24**

“ Lord make us excellent servants, ready and willing, eager to serve you and our world.”