

Set It On Your Heart to Serve Your Local Church Family

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All Christians do well to serve as Christ has served us. How gracious is His love for us! O how lavish is His mercy toward us! How steadfast is His faithfulness toward us. In light of who our Savior is and what He has done for us, what are a few practical ways that you can *set it on your heart to serve your local church family*? Below are 5 simple ways you can serve your church.

1. Attend

When you joined your church family as a member, you probably signed some sort of form that talked about membership vows or commitments with the other believers. Undoubtedly one of the ways in which members serve one another regularly and consistently is through attendance. It almost doesn't need to be said it's so obvious. But then again, it does need to be explicitly stated. One of the greatest and simplest ways to serve your local church family is through being there physically and being there in a prepared way consistently. In attending, you are physically showing that your *priority* is with God and His people and with the gathering of the spiritual family and with the hearing of His authoritative Word. In being prepared to worship internally, you show yourself to be diligently proactive in seeking great things from God, expecting great things from His Word, and speaking great truths of the gospel to one another for the edification of the saints. Very simply, mark it on your heart to attend your local church's worship services with the utmost regularity.

2. Greet

How frequently does the Apostle Paul greet the saints in his letters? Consider how Paul loves to express heartfelt love toward the fellow saints who serve Christ in local churches! Romans 16 provides quite a sampling of exhortations to "greet the saints." Hebrews 13:24 specifically commands believers to greet the leaders and all the saints. In that culture, they were to greet one another with a kiss of love (1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Pet 5:14). But how about you? How can you proactively and regularly and *intentionally* greet those in your local church? Yes, greet those whom you know *and* those who you don't know -- indeed, even those who may be different than you. One way to apply and implement this may be to arrive at church 15 minutes early and endeavor to shake the hands of folks with a particular line of encouragement and preparation to meet with the living God. Consider when the service is over, getting out of your seat and approaching someone else who is alone, or who you don't know, and sharing one thing that the Lord showed you from His Word and asking what they learned from the sermon. To greet is to express heartfelt love to the fellow believers in the Christian assembly. Let's do this!

3. Pray

As a shepherd, one of my foremost duties is to intercede for the flock of God that He has called me to serve. I must pray for them, with them, on behalf of them, and bring them to the Father in diligent, specific, fervent prayer. And for this privilege, I rejoice and glory. But thanks be

to God I'm not the only one who can pray for the flock. Consider what it would be like if you prayed for your church family -- by name, specifically, with regularity. Think of one of the greatest ways you can serve is something that can be done in the privacy of your home, or during an hour of fellowship with another brother from the church as you say: "Come, let's pray for the church family together, by name." Never underestimate the power of diligent, specific, continual intercessory prayer for the saints. However young or old you may be, whatever your work schedule or vocation may be, whether retired or entering the work force, re-embrace the almighty power of prayer as a specific and necessary way to serve in your church.

4. Disciple

Everyone talks about discipleship. What is it? It is the regular activity of believers whereby one Christian helps another Christian walk with Jesus. To disciple others does not mean you need to be a part of a large ministry, though it can include that. Discipleship includes writing words of encouragement, calling another brother or sister and praying with them and sharing Scripture together, meeting with a fellow member for regular Bible reading and prayer together, taking a younger saint with you as you live the Christian life so they learn from your example. The main ingredients with discipleship are two-fold: *intentionality* and *sacrifice*. Discipleship requires intentionality because the Lord wants our hearts to be fully given to Him *and* to His people. Furthermore, the Lord calls His people to self-sacrifice and to daily mortification of one's own pursuits and desires for the greater joy of pursuing God and His glory and the good of His people. Set it on your heart to intentionally serve and sacrificially disciple others and help them grow in Christ.

5. Remain

An additional way to serve in your local church, as imperfect as it may be and with the flaws that it may have, consists in the simple and yet profound element of being faithful. Quite simply, remain where you are! Make a commitment to a church and join in membership, and then stay there! Remain faithful! Serve regularly! Encourage your flock. Whether numbers go up or go down, whether a leader comes or one leaves, whether a season of hardship or suffering or persecution or relative ease is upon you, set it on your heart to remain there and remain faithful. Our society has become professionals at attending and going and staying and contributing *as long as there's something in it for me*, but then when that seems to wane, the prevailing attitude is to jump ship and move on to something else and something bigger and more fulfilling. O how we need to teach the next generation of young people the importance of regular, steady, persistent, and enduring *faithfulness*. Stay put! Stay faithful! When it's hard, *remain committed*. (Of course there are biblical reasons to leave a church and go to another, but sadly, many times people leave a church and go to another are not for *biblical* reasons but for *preferential* reasons.) I believe one way for saints to serve is to simply remain faithful to the local church, to pray for her, to love her, to care for her, and to live together with her in the journey of sanctification.