

church of Christ at Greenwood

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March 31, 2024

Make Me A Servant **Bubba Garner**

I like to browse through the used book stores. There's one on Spencer Highway that I particularly frequent called "The Dusty Cover." Unfortunately, that also describes about half of the library in my office.

I found a book in the religious section there a few years back entitled *Difficult Passages in the Bible*. It was good for me to see that because I used to think that the preacher was supposed to have every single Scripture figured out. Whether it was some obscure vision of the Old Testament or some revelation in the last book of the New Testament, nothing was supposed to be difficult for him to understand or explain. But even the Apostle Peter commented on Paul's writings, "in which are some things hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16). I just know he had the book of Romans in mind.

And yet there is a different kind of difficult passage in the Bible. These are challenging, not just with respect to information but with regard to application. One such Scripture is found in Philippians 2:5: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." That's hard for me.

The call to be like Christ is no easy task. Peter gave instruction to follow "in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21), and Paul invited the Corinthians to "be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). But walking in those steps includes an imitation of Jesus' summation of His whole life's work when He said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). If you want to follow Jesus, you're going to have to become a servant.

Just how is a servant made? What are the ingredients needed for such a transformation?

A voluntary spirit. Jesus was not forced into His role as a servant. He "emptied Himself" (Philippians 2:7). "He humbled Himself" (Philippians 2:8). No one did that for Him. No one coerced or forced Him in this regard. He did it Himself. Just as He said in the

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Good Shepherd passage, “I lay down my life for the sheep...no one has taken it from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative” (John 10:15,18). Such is the spirit of a servant.

God’s army must be made up of volunteers. Yet, we sometimes look like waiters in a restaurant who are serving only because we are under obligation and feel like we “have to.” Service ought to be viewed as the privilege of those who were shown favor by the greatest servant of all, Jesus Christ. Without Him, our spirits would be without hope.

A selfless disposition. “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4). Jesus certainly showed us the way in this regard. He was not concerned with worldly goods or fortunes; He didn’t even have a place to lay His head. He put no stock in popularity or praise; He sought the glory of His Father. Even on the cross, His focus was not on selfish ambitions but on the very people for whom He was crucified.

In a world that is so often racing to be first at the finish line, God’s servants must place themselves last. Especially ought this to be our attitude in our service to one another. Christians are to “be devoted to one another in brotherly love,” giving “preference to one another in honor” (Romans 12:10). The best way to do that is to dispose of self. It’s where the footsteps of our Lord lead.

A humble demeanor. Jesus existed in the “form of God” (Philippians 2:6) yet took on the “form of a bond-servant” (Philippians 2:7). Further, “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). He did not consider Himself too important, too high, or too mighty to stoop and serve. He just humbly submitted Himself to be the sacrifice and the greatest example of service for all men.

One reason I love the hymn ***Make Me A Servant***, written by Tim Jennings and Matt Bassford, is the opening of the second verse: “Make me a servant, take all my pride.” Jesus never said of the task before Him, “isn’t there an angel who could take care of this?” Neither is there any work of service in God’s kingdom that is beneath your humble submission. Those who do so are promised an exaltation from God at the proper time (James 4:10).

One of the pictures of the redeemed in the book of Revelation is that they are “before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple” (Revelation 7:15). Servanthood is our privilege here and our destiny there. It is what we’re made for.