

The World in Need - The Church in Need!

Introduction:

1. Here are some rather startling statistics:
 - Over 3,700 churches a year are closing their doors in America.
 - Over 50% of all Protestant churches will have fewer than 75 people in worship on Sunday.
 - We live in the era of the mega-church, yet statistically fewer people are attending church in America.
2. As we look at this landscape, we have to ask the question, “What is the problem?” While I certainly don't want to over-simplify, one of the major issues is that the church has become far too inwardly focused and has lost sight of the world outside its walls.
3. I'm afraid that many times, we have built churches that are like spiritual cocoons. Those on the inside feel warm and comfortable, but nobody from the outside can seem to get in.
4. But what was the attitude of our Savior, Jesus Christ? He is our heavenly Head and we, the church, are His body. What was His heart? Matthew 9:35-36
 - He was “*moved with compassion.*” This means “to yearn, to feel sympathy.”
 - Do we yearn for others in our community? Are we moved with compassion like Christ? Do we care that those outside of our community of faith are perishing?
 - Or are we quite content with our church family the way it is now? I mean after all, if too many others come into our church they may mess up a good thing we've got going.
5. Is the world in need, today? Absolutely, it is. But I believe the church is in **greater** need. We have the answer, we have the solution, **but the church has to care!** We have to be moved with compassion like our Savior.
6. What does a healthy church look like? Acts 9:31 is insightful.
 - The believers in these churches were growing spiritually (edified). Their walk in their communities was distinctively different. They were walking in the fear of the Lord.
 - But then notice the last two words, “*were multiplied.*”
 - These churches were not glorified social clubs or exclusive groups. “Others” were being added and welcomed continually.
7. You have heard me say this many times before; a healthy church is a church for others.
8. Members off CrossRoads, we must be aware of those around us who are in need; that are searching for answers. We must exhibit a Philippians 2:4 attitude. “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*”
9. The key to reaching our communities with the gospel is for God's people to become focused on the needs of others outside the walls of the church, outside of our cliques, and outside of our spiritual cocoons. When we become focused on the needs of others:

It is a mark of godly maturity.

1. When Jesus walked this earth, He shared a very insightful principle with the nation of Israel that has great application for us today. Matthew 5:44-47
2. Now let's see how Jesus ended this teaching in verse 48.
 - The word "*perfect*" here does not mean "sinless." The word "*perfect*" implies full development and growth into a maturity of godliness.
 - If we say about a baseball player, "He has really perfected the art of hitting," we are not implying that he never makes an out or never strikes out. We mean that he has matured as a hitter and developed the art of hitting.
3. Notice Jesus said, "*Even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*"
 - Jesus is saying, "When you live by this principle you are acting like God would act. You are demonstrating God-like maturity and growth.
4. Our God is a God for others! Does God only love those that love Him? Does God only do good to those who are part of His family? No! Notice verse 45.
 - Every day that the sun comes up, and life is sustained another day on this planet, God shows His love to the people of this world.
 - Every time rain falls from heaven to water the fields and crops so that we can have food, God shows His love for people. What does John 3:16 state? He is a God for others.
 - 1 Timothy 2:4 proclaims that God "*will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*" He is a God for others!
5. How do we naturally tend to relate to others? We tend to love those who are like us. If God loved this way, who would God love? Is there anybody in here on the same plateau as God? Aren't you thankful He is a God for others? Otherwise we wouldn't know His love.
 - But many times we only love those who are like us; people we are comfortable with, and there is nothing extraordinary about that. verse 47
6. All throughout the Bible, we see that God is a God for others. Even in the Old Testament when God was working through the nation of Israel, He gave instructions to His people regarding "*strangers.*"
 - In Leviticus 19:10 God taught Israel not to glean all the harvest of their lands, but to leave some for the poor and stranger. God cared for the "others." We can certainly apply this. Churches today are gleaning the entire harvest and spending it all on themselves.
 - In Leviticus 19:33-34 God told Israel to love the stranger as yourself. Why? Because you were strangers once. We can certainly apply this. Remember when you were a stranger in church? Remember when you were a first-time guest?
7. We are acting like God when we reach beyond ourselves (our desires, our self-fulfillment, our preferences, our cliques, our pet peeves, our self-interest, our self-preoccupation) and see the needs of others.
8. Many times churches fail to be churches for others, and it is not because they are bad people. They are simply preoccupied.

- We get preoccupied with getting to our L.I.F.E. Groups, doing our ministries, getting our parking places, sitting in our favorite seats, getting our kids to their classes, and we get tunnel vision.
 - But when you begin to look to the needs of others and befriend others, you know that you are maturing spiritually. When all we do is care for ourselves and welcome our friends, Jesus said that we are simply doing what even a lost person would do.
 - We as believers desperately need an attitude adjustment. Instead of our attitude being, “Who didn't shake my hand”, our thoughts are, “Whose hand did I miss, who needed a friendly greeting that I missed?” We begin to think things like, “I went to church today and I didn't get to be a blessing to anyone. I wonder who I missed.”
 - Instead of saying, “I don't need the fellowship of a L.I.F.E. Group”, we begin to think, “I wonder who might need my fellowship in a L.I.F.E. Group?”
9. As we begin to grow spiritually, we begin to realize that it is not all about us. It is not about what I got out of church today. The question becomes, “Who did I impact? Who did I give to? What need did I meet?”
 10. By the way, these attitudes should begin at church but then should extend to our home lives, our work lives, and in every other area of life. We are looking to meet the needs of others.
 11. Let's look one more time at Philippians 2:4, “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*” This is the mind of Christ.

In Conclusion:

1. Our God is a missionary God. God moves out in love towards the lost and the outcast, the poor, oppressed, and lonely.
2. God is a missionary God and the church of Jesus Christ must be a missionary church. It starts right here.
3. Why do we exist? We exist to participate in God's mission. God is trying to reach out and seek and save the lost, and we are His ambassadors to help and participate in what He is doing.
 - Without a mission, there is no church.
4. What are you doing to help us become a church for others?

The World in Need - The Church in Need! (Part 2)

Introduction:

1. Last week we saw some startling statistics about churches in America.
 - Over 3,700 churches per year are closing their doors in America.
 - Over 50% of all Protestant churches will have fewer than 75 people in worship on Sunday.
 - Only 21% of Americans attend church each week.
 - It is estimated that 53,000 people leave churches each week and never go back.
2. What is the problem? The church has lost sight of the world outside its walls. We have become “churches for us” instead of “churches for others.”
 - (Cartoon depicting unfriendly church) Their attitude is, “We don't want outsiders coming in here and messing up the good thing we've got going.”
3. But we must look to our Savior, the risen Head of the body of Christ, and we must see His heart and His attitude towards others. Let's look at Matthew 15:29-31.
 - What love our Savior had for people. He was a Savior for “*others*.”
 - Did you notice in verse 30 that it said that “*many others*” came to Jesus? The word “*others*” literally means “different.” It is also translated “*strange*” in other places.
 - Notice again in verse 32 that Christ is not self-consumed, but focused on others.
4. As we look at the world today, there is no doubt that the world is in great need. Satan is the “god of this world” and has implemented a policy of evil on this earth that is designed to keep people in darkness, sin, and wickedness.
5. But the church is also in great need. Our greatest need is to be moved with compassion and to **care** about the people that are ensnared in Satan's world system.
6. Until we care, there is no hope. We are Christ's ambassadors and the hope of glory lives in us! Colossians 1:27-28 (Notice our commission.)
7. Why did people come to Jesus? Why do people attend a church? Why should we become a church for others? Let's look at the second reason tonight.

Second, because it is a mark of Christ-like love

1. As we look at Matthew 15:29-31 we ask the question, “Why did these people come to Jesus?” What is it that motivated them to seek Christ?
 - I think the text is abundantly clear. It is because they had needs—genuine needs—serious problems, and sobering issues that they were dealing with.
 - They needed help and thought they could get that help if they went to Jesus.
2. Let's seek to apply this principle personally. Why do people come to church—our church?

- What would motivate people to get up, get dressed on a Sunday morning, drive to a place they have never been, and walk into a place filled with people they don't know?
 - They come to church for the same reason that these people went to Jesus. They have genuine needs and they are thinking that they can get the help they need at church.
3. But here is the sad part. So often, people don't find the same love and compassion at church that these people did at the feet of Jesus.
 4. Instead of being a church for others, the prevailing attitude is, "We've built a church for us!" Here at CrossRoads our desire should be to be like Christ and be a church for others.
 5. Let me ask our members a question. Do we care that there are people in our midst every Sunday that are grief-stricken, lonely, confused, mentally disturbed, on the brink of suicide, terminally ill, have open wounds from a recent divorce, physically disabled, etc.?
 - You also rub shoulders with these same people at work, in your neighborhood, in your college class, at the gym, on the ball team, at the grocery store, etc.
 - Does it occur to you to try to find people with needs and represent Christ to them?
 6. Even on Sunday mornings, when we have supposedly set aside time for the Lord, the average church member is too busy to be concerned with hurting and needy people. We are too busy worrying about real important things like:
 - Is the choir going to be any good today?
 - Will the preacher be entertaining and minister to me today?
 - Am I going to be able to get my favorite seat?
 - Are they going to sing songs that I like and know?
 - Is the temperature of the church going to be where I like it?
 - Is the invitation going to be short so I can get to lunch before the crowds?
 7. We worry about really important things like the Pharisees (Matthew 15:1-2).
 - Meanwhile people around us are perishing in their sin and being swallowed up with the issues of life.
 8. It reminds me of a story in Mark 9:33-37 (read verses 33-34).
 - This is so like our fleshly nature. The disciples are in the midst of front-line ministry with Jesus. vs. 17-18, 20, 25-29
 - Lives are being changed, people impacted, but there are multitudes more that they need to reach. But the disciples get derailed. They get side-tracked with their own agenda. What an "important" issue! "Which of us will be the greatest?"
 9. Let's apply this to the church. People are in need, lives are being changed and we get derailed by petty issues (preacher didn't shake my hand, the L.I.F.E. Group forgot my birthday, we need more paved parking, we need a bigger L.I.F.E. Group room, etc.).
 - In this text, Jesus takes a child (vs. 36-37) and sets him down and says, "Boys, this is what it is all about: others! It is not about you and your position and your agenda. It is all about others."

- We must continue to be a church for others. Why? It is a mark of Christ-like love.
10. I am reminded of the parable Jesus told in Luke 10:30-37.
- Before we are too hard on the priest and Levite, be honest. Haven't we been guilty?
 - We pass right by lonely, hurting, confused people, right here at church every Sunday!
 - We are on our way to sing in the choir, teach a class, work in Junior Church, get to our usher's post, get our kids to class, get to our favorite seat, and get to our car so we can beat the lunch crowd (meet our friends).
 - My prayer is that God will raise up a host of good Samaritans here at CrossRoads, people with hearts for others. It is a mark of Christ-like love. Philippians 2:4-5

In Conclusion:

1. Jesus is no longer physically here on this earth. He indwells those who know Him as Savior and works through them. John 17:26
2. If people are to see the mercy, love, and compassion of Christ, they must see it in you and me.
3. A church for others is a church where Christ-like love abounds in and through its members! John 13:34-35

The World in Need - The Church in Need (Part 3)

1. We have seen some startling statistics the past few weeks about churches in America.
 - Over 3,700 churches a year are closing their doors in America.
 - Over 50% of all Protestant churches will have fewer than 75 people in worship on Sunday.
 - Only 21% of Americans attend church each week.
 - It is estimated that 53,000 people leave churches each week and never go back.
2. Certainly there is a problem. But what exactly is the problem? The church has lost sight of the world outside its walls. We have become “churches for us” instead of “churches for others.”
3. In the past two weeks we caught a glimpse into the heart of our Savior and we saw clearly in God's Word that our Savior had a heart for others when He walked this earth.
4. But we must understand that His heart has not changed. He is in heaven now and He is yearning for people to come to Him and trust Him as their Savior.
5. But today He works through His body, the church. We are His ambassadors, His representatives on the earth. Christ demonstrates His love and compassion **through us!**
6. If there is one thing that is abundantly clear in Scripture it is this: Our God is a missionary God. God moves out in love toward the lost, the aimless, the poor, the oppressed, the sick, and the lonely. 1 John 4:9-10
7. God is a missionary God and the church must be a missionary church.
 - We exist to participate in God's mission.
 - Without a mission there is no church.
8. The church does not exist so we can have a social club, entertainment program, or lots of activities to keep ourselves busy.
9. We are here for others. We are to reach out with the love of Christ. We must be a church for others. Why?

First, because it is a mark of godly maturity

Second, because it is a mark of Christ-like love

Third, because it is a mark of Spirit fullness

1. God has called us to participate in His mission, but the good news is that God has also enabled us and equipped us to do it. He has indwelt us with His Spirit! Ephesians 4:6 (The Father), Colossians 1:27 (Son), 1 Corinthians 3:16 (Holy Spirit)
2. According to Ephesians 1:13 this divine indwelling takes place the moment you believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - At that moment, your spirit and God's Spirit becomes one.
1 Corinthians 6:17

- If God's Spirit doesn't live in you, Romans 8:9 teaches that you don't belong to God.
 - When the Holy Spirit entered into our hearts, He did not come to simply be resident; He came to be president! He came to take over and transform us into the image of Christ.
3. Once you enter into God's family, everything in your life really boils down to two choices:
 - You either choose to be filled with God's Spirit... (Ephesians 5:18)
 - ...or you choose to quench the Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19
 4. What does it mean to be filled with God's Spirit? It simply means that the Spirit of God has total control of your life.
 5. Did you know that Spirit fullness always manifests itself in the form of a servant's heart?
 - Christ epitomized a Spirit-filled person and His life was characterized by serving others. Matthew 20:27-28; Philippians 2:4-5
 - Jesus had a heart for others. He wasn't self-focused, but others-focused. The Bible says, "*Let this mind be in you....*"
 - A Spirit-filled church is a church for others, and its members are not preoccupied with self, but continually manifest hearts for others.
 6. How does this "others" attitude reveal itself? Turn to Acts 8. This chapter revolves around a man by the name of Philip.
 - Philip was one of the first deacons in the early church (Acts 6), but when persecution came on the early church, believers scattered from Jerusalem and Philip became a traveling evangelist (8:5). He epitomized this "others" attitude.
 7. This is significant because, up to this point, the good news of Jesus had not gone to this region called Samaria. The Jews considered the Samaritans unclean (half-breeds) and were very prejudiced toward them.
 8. But Philip didn't; he saw beyond people's racial heritages. He saw them as souls for whom Christ died. He preached Christ to them and multitudes came to Jesus and believed on Him.
 9. Why did Philip care so much about these people? According to Acts 6:3, he was a man "*full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.*"
 - When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you don't see the color of a person's skin, what they are wearing, how they smell, or what kind of house he lives in. You see a precious soul for whom Christ died. And you love him as Christ would love him.
 10. Here is what is interesting: They were having an incredible revival in Samaria, but God told Philip to leave and go into the desert. vs. 26
 - Notice the immediate obedience of Philip. vs. 27a
 - Why would God do a thing like this? vs. 27b-29
 - There was **one** person that God wanted Philip to reach. He was a man from Ethiopia that was seeking after God.
 - In verse 29 the Holy Spirit led Philip to go and join himself to this guy. Look at Philip's response in verse 30. "*He ran thither*" means "to hasten to meet."

11. Did you know that there are people like this Ethiopian man that are in our church every Sunday?
- There are people who are confused, that need help, and that are searching for God. They need a Philip. They need someone who will hasten to meet them. They need somebody that is filled and controlled by God's Holy Spirit instead of controlled by his own self-centered preoccupations.
 - Do we come to church with yieldedness to God's Spirit like Philip?
 - Do we pray during the week, "God, guide me to somebody at church this Sunday who needs me?" Are we looking for people in need?
 - Or do we quench God's Spirit in our lives because we are so busy talking to people in our clique, running to our ministries, or just doing "our thing" on Sunday?

In Conclusion:

1. Maybe our thought is, "The preacher will reach them with his message today."
2. When people are reached for God, do you know how they are usually reached? By another person who is filled with God's Spirit and has Christ-like love and compassion.
3. In verse 31, the Ethiopian man said, "*How can I except some man should guide me?*"
4. Philip became that man (vs. 35), and because he was willing to be that man, this Ethiopian man believed on Christ.
5. A church for others begins with Spirit-filled members. It begins with people who come to church each Sunday with a ministry mindset. Our prayer becomes, "Lord, may we be a church for others and may it begin with **me**."

Loving the Outcasts **Mark 1:40-45**

Introduction:

1. Imagine a dirty child hugging his mother.
2. Today we want to see how Jesus responded in exactly the same way towards a leper. Mark 1:40 states, *“There came a leper to him.”*
3. This is amazing in and of itself because lepers were the outcasts of society. It was the ultimate in uncleanness for a Jew. If you had leprosy, it meant a life of isolation and loneliness.
4. Are there “outcasts” that live in our society, today?
 - How about those who are physically handicapped, those stuck in nursing homes and are all alone with nobody to visit them, those with addictions, those who are homeless, those with AIDS, those children who are overweight or maybe just can't seem to fit in, those who are mentally challenged, teens in juvenile delinquency centers, etc.?
5. There are many in our society who feel like outcasts because of a divorce, or physical abuse, or sexual abuse, or emotional and mental abuse.
6. There are many who feel like this leper. They feel very alone, cut off from society, isolated, and feel like nobody wants to be around them.
7. This is where the church, the body of Christ, comes in. In a church for others, outcasts are not only welcomed, they are truly loved! Why is this so important for our church? It is very simple:

Jesus loves outcasts.

1. In verse 40, this leper came and approached Jesus. He was taking a chance that Jesus might walk away as the Scribes and Pharisees did, or that Jesus might cast stones at him or taunt him like others did.
2. But he felt that Jesus was different. He felt this man might just be the One who could change his whole life. Man, was he ever right! vs. 41-42
 - Jesus loved this leper, and He took action when nobody else would. Jesus acted when the rest of society forsook this man. He acted when this man's own religion ignored him.
3. I wonder how many people in our community are like this leper and they think, “I wonder if those people at CrossRoads are different? I wonder if they will love me, accept me, and help me?”
 - Just as this man came to Jesus, people come to us.
 - They come to a Sunday morning service, or a Bible Study, or GriefShare, or teen night on Wednesdays, or a Single Adults’ Bible Study, or a Single Mom's activity, or ride the bus to church, or come to our Deaf Ministry, or come to WTB, or attend a support group, etc.
4. Jesus didn't turn His back on the outcast, or walk by him or ignore him. Nor can we!

5. We must not only welcome outcasts, but love and care for them! Why? It is very simple. Jesus loves outcasts, and He lives in us and desires to live and love through us.
6. Jesus knows what it feels like to be an outcast and be forsaken and have nobody.
7. **But how do we love the outcasts that God sends our way? There are two thoughts here in our text.**

First, we must allow compassion to move us.

- A. Verse 41 says that Christ was *“moved with compassion.”*
 - This means that Jesus had a depth of feeling towards this man. Ten times we are told in the gospels that Jesus had compassion on people around Him. It bothered Him to see people suffering and in need.
- B. Does it bother us? Do we really care? Does it ever occur to us that people are in our midst (at church, work, etc.) that are deeply wounded and suffering?
- C. It is so easy **not** to care. We see so much suffering and pain. It is easy, if we're not careful, to build shells and shield ourselves from the suffering around us, and become hardened and calloused. Jesus refused to do this.
- D. I love to see new ministries start in our church. Do you know what ministry is? It is something that **helps people**.
 - If somebody were to say, “Let's start a new committee,” I wouldn't get very excited. But when somebody says, “Pastor, I would like to start a new ministry,” I get pumped!
 - Committees discuss; ministries act! Committees are into maintaining; ministries are into helping people.
- E. Why do people start new ministries? Compassion moves them.
- F. A church for others is a church of compassion. Jude 22

Second, we must allow Jesus to touch others through us.

- A. I love verse 41. *“Jesus put forth his hand and touched him.”*
- B. You have to understand the life of a leper in Jesus' day to really appreciate what Christ did here.
 - The leper had to cry out, “Unclean, unclean,” lest anyone get too close.
 - But Jesus didn't avoid him, didn't run away like all the rest, didn't avoid eye contact with him, and didn't just feel sorry for him. Jesus put forth His hand and touched him.
- C. Jesus has ascended into heaven and sent back His Spirit to dwell in those who believe on Him. Now if Jesus is going to touch those who need a touch, He will do it through **us**—His body, the church!
 - We are Jesus' hands of compassion. We are His hands of love in a world that is crying for someone to care.

- Jesus was not turned back by the repulsiveness of the leper and He doesn't want us to turn our backs on the outcasts and lepers of our society.
 - Jesus wants us to minister to people, regardless of who they are or what they have.
 - Jesus' touch of compassion comes through us, through our touch, through our love, and through our caring.
- D. Each Sunday when we come to church our prayer should be, “Lord Jesus, touch someone through me today. Show compassion to someone through me.”
- E. The question we should be asking ourselves is, “What ministry can I be involved in whereby You can touch and impact others through me?”

In Conclusion:

1. After Jesus heals this leper, He tells him something that may seem a little strange to you (vs. 43-44). First of all, this was what the Law of Moses commanded, but secondly, this was to be a testimony to them that Christ was the Messiah.
2. Jesus didn't say to **never** tell anybody, but **first** go to the priests and show them.
3. This guy goes out and starts telling everybody (vs. 45), and people came to Jesus.
4. When a church becomes a church for others, word spreads!

Changing Lives One Person at a Time **2 Timothy 2:24-26**

Introduction:

1. What images come to your mind when I say the word “change?” In many churches, the word “change” is a dirty word. Change is not always well accepted.
 - In a church for others, not only is change tolerated, it is embraced.
2. The gospel of Jesus Christ is all about change. There is an inherent power in the gospel of Christ that changes a person from the inside out when it is accepted by a person.
Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 5:17
3. In a church for others, lives are being changed one person at a time. God desires to use our church (our people), and to use you to lead people to make life-changing decisions at crossroads times in their lives (marriage, graduation, starting college, death of loved one, birth of child, divorce, move into area, etc).
4. This is what the apostle Paul taught a young pastor named Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24-26.
5. How can our church change lives one person at a time? This passage holds the keys:

First, we must believe that God’s truth can change anybody.

1. In verse 26, the picture is of people that are in total bondage to Satan.
 - The phrase, “*may recover themselves*” literally means “to become sober again; to regain one’s senses.” It conveys the idea of someone coming out of a drunken stupor. It describes a person who has lost his sense of reality.
 - “*snare*” – a trap (as fastened by a noose); a trick
 - “*taken captive*” – to take alive; make a prisoner of war
 - They have stumbled, fallen into Satan’s trap, and been taken alive as prisoners. It is not a pretty picture.
2. But, God says these people can be brought to repentance, and can be recovered! They can be set free. They can be changed and transformed (a new person).
3. Many times, we are too quick to write a person off, and we say, “He’ll never change. You’ll never convince him. He’s too hard a nut to crack.”
4. Paul really believed that lives can be changed. Why? Let me remind you of the guy God used to write this book of the Bible.
 - Paul sought to destroy the church. He dragged believers to prison, he blasphemed, he slaughtered believers, he was full of rage and anger, and he was violent and abusive.
 - But the gospel of Christ completely transformed him into a different man.
 - There are over 25 verses that deal with Paul’s ruthless, bloody, and barbaric behavior before he accepted Christ. Why is this in the Bible? It is to teach us that nobody is beyond saving.

5. I've heard people say, "He's gone too far. He has crossed the limit. He is beyond saving." I am so glad that God's grace knows no boundaries. It is never too late, until you die. Once you die, your eternal destiny is settled. Romans 5:20
6. A church for others is at the prisons, juvenile delinquency centers, drug rehab centers, etc. Why? Because a church for others believes that God's truth can change anybody.
1 Corinthians 6:9-11
7. Has God's truth changed you? Have you experienced the power of the gospel?

Second, we must be available to share God's truth.

1. God's truth can change anybody, but not if they don't hear it! Romans 10:14
 - Our job is to proclaim His truth. This is why the church exists. 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:15
2. Look in our text at verses 24-25. As servants of the Lord, this is **our** job. Not **my** job... **our** job. If you are a servant of the Lord, this passage explains clearly what you are to do and how you are to do it.
3. We are to teach and instruct those in bondage to Satan.
 - We aren't to give up on them, write them off, or tell them off.
 - "*Instructing*" means "to teach; to educate."
 - Remember the snare that they are in? The snare of Satan is his lies. We must counteract that with the truth of God's Word (vs. 15). This is what we are to be teaching.
4. How are we to share God's truth?
 - "*be gentle unto all men*" - kind
 - "*patient*" - forbearing
 - "*In meekness*" - a spirit of humility
 - We should never share God's truth in an arrogant or hostile manner. When it says, "*must not strive*," this means "to quarrel; dispute."
5. You and I can't save anybody. Our job is to share God's truth and then pray that God will use it in a powerful way in that person's life.
6. Romans 6:17 says that these people "*were the servants of sin.*" Paul **delivered** to them the truth and they obeyed it. The result was that their lives were radically changed (vs. 18). We are God's delivery boys!
7. Why is our church growing and why are lives being changed? Because we have a lot of people who are dedicated to sharing God's truth with others. This is so crucial. John 8:32

Third, we must lead people to repentance.

1. Repentance leads to recovery from Satan's bondage (vs. 25-26). Without repentance, there is no true, lasting recovery.
2. Repentance is not:
 - Being sorry because you got caught.
 - Being embarrassed because your sin was exposed.

- Seeking God because you want God to simply change your circumstances and take away all your problems. You're in a mess and you want God to bail you out.
3. True repentance is seeing your sin as God sees it, then turning from sin and self unto God and embracing His truth. It is awareness that what we have done is wrong and that we have offended God.
 - The word “*repentance*” in verse 25 means “reversal.” It is a U-turn, a complete one-eighty.
 - Example: 1 Thessalonians 1:9
 4. Every ministry of our church is geared towards sharing the truth and leading people to repentance. Example: Counseling – the goal is not to simply make people feel better, but to get to the root of the problem.
 5. If people are to be recovered from the snares of the devil, it will take repentance and turning to the truth. The person in bondage is the only one who can decide to do this.
vs. 26
 6. We can share God's truth and lead people, but it must be their decision. You've heard the expression, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.” You can share God's truth and lead people to repentance, but you can't make them repent and turn to God.
 7. Every day that God withholds judgment from planet earth, He is giving us an opportunity to repent and turn to the truth. Romans 2:4b

In Conclusion:

1. As believers and servants of the Lord, we should be all about seeing lives changed one person at a time. What will it take?
 - We must believe God's truth can change anybody.
 - We must stand ready and willing to share God's truth.
 - We must lead people to repentance and see them set free through God's truth.
2. In a church for others, truth is changing lives.

Growing Deeper in the Love of Christ Ephesians 3:16-20

Introduction:

1. Do you remember when you were a kid and you had what other people called “puppy love?” This meant that it was a surface love that wasn't rooted and grounded in true love. It was quick to change; here today, gone tomorrow; a passing affection.
2. There are many believers who have a puppy love mentality in their relationship with Christ.
 - Do you ever feel distant from Christ?
 - Do you ever find yourself questioning His love for you?
 - Do you struggle loving other people or accepting love from others?
 - Do you find serving God to be a chore at times (like mowing the grass or doing the dishes)?
3. The key to all of these issues is growing deeper in the love of Christ.
4. **Ephesians 3:16-20** is an awesome passage. It is Paul's prayer for these saints at Ephesus.
5. He wanted them to possess, not just a puppy love understanding of Christ's love, but a true, biblical, divine, deep understanding of the true love of Christ.
6. Do you desire to grow deeper in the love of Christ? If so, there are three decisions you must make, based on **Ephesians 3:16-20**.

I am determined to grow and change. vs. 16

1. Paul's prayer is that these believers would be “*strengthened with might.*”
 - The word “*strengthened*” means, “increase in vigor, empower.”
 - The phrase “*with might*” literally means, “miraculous power.”
2. Paul was praying for some divine, supernatural growth to take place in the inner spirits of these believers.
3. When spiritual growth takes place in a believer's life, how is it evidenced? Look at the next chapter and Paul will show you.
 - We no longer lie, but tell the truth. 4:25
 - We no longer hold angry grudges. 4:26
 - We no longer allow Satan to control us. 4:27
 - We no longer steal, but work hard and desire to be givers. 4:28
 - We speak in a way that ministers grace to others. 4:29
 - Our heart attitudes manifest grace. 4:31-32
4. Do you know what spiritual growth looks like in the believer? CHANGE!
5. This growth comes by God's Holy Spirit working in the inner man (the spirit) of the believer. Christ's Spirit and our spirit become one at salvation. **1 Corinthians 6:17**
 - Today, in America, you have TV preachers and denominations that are consumed with outward miracles, signs and wonders. They desperately want to pretend that they are living in Israel's kingdom program.
 - But, as you listen to them, you can readily see that their understanding of God's Word is rudimentary and that they are very shallow in their Christian walk.
6. True miraculous growth takes place in our inner man. Instead of feeding your flesh, you are feeding your spirit with God's Word. 4:22-24

7. If you desire to grow deeper in the love of Christ, you must be committed to growing and changing. This only happens as you take in and digest God's Word. **Hebrews 5:12-14**
8. There are no shortcuts. Growth is a process that happens as you make daily choices to feed your spirit instead of your flesh. **Ephesians 4:12-15**

I will trust Christ in every area of my life. vs. 17

1. Paul prayed, "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."
2. Does this seem odd to you? They were already believers and had been placed in Christ. They had already trusted Christ and been saved.
 - The heart is the seat of your thoughts, emotions, desires, and will.
 - This word "dwell" means "to settle down and be at home."
3. Paul was praying that these believers would allow Christ to have total control of their hearts (thoughts, desires, emotions, will). He wanted Christ to not only dwell in their inner man (spirit), but also feel at home and be in control of their hearts.
 - In other words, by faith, they would depend on Christ each and every moment. They would trust Him in every area of their hearts. Christ would rule and reign over every little crevice of their hearts.
4. As long as you hold parts of your heart back from Christ, you will never know His love in a personal and intimate way. Love relationships are built on trust. Every believer has a preliminary awareness of Christ's love, but God wants you to grow in that love.
 - **Illustration:** Married couple - when one or both of them holds back parts of their lives, it hinders their love from growing.
5. As you give Christ every area of your heart, you become rooted and grounded in love. That love relationship begins to flourish. vs. 17; cf. **Colossians 2:7**
6. As you grow in your relationship with Christ, you become rooted and grounded in love because Christ **is** love.

I will accept Christ's unconditional love for me. vs. 18-19

1. Paul desperately wanted these believers to know, understand, and perceive something.
 - Verse 18 - "*may be able to comprehend*"
 - Verse 19 - "*And to know...*" This means, "to perceive, to understand."
2. What did Paul want them to know and understand? The love of Christ!
3. In verse 18, Paul uses the terms, "breadth, length, depth, and height." Paul is trying to convey the immeasurable, unconditional, love of Christ for His children. **Romans 8:35, 37-39**
 - Nothing from heaven or hell, east or west, north or south, can change Christ's love for us. His love is higher than the heavens, deeper than hell, wider than the ocean, longer than the earth. It is boundless and endless.
4. Many people have a hard time accepting this unconditional love. Why?
 - Past sins and failures
 - Feelings of unworthiness
 - They have never experienced true unconditional love before. It sounds too good to be true.

5. So, how do you grow in the knowledge of this love?
 - It won't happen academically (vs. 19) through carnal, fleshly knowledge. You won't figure it out like a math formula.
 - It must be spiritually revealed through God's Word. You read God's Word and you accept it by faith. Read Paul's letters and notice every time you see the words "in Christ."

In Conclusion:

1. When you make these decisions, what is the result? Verse 19 says that you are "*filled with all the fullness of God.*"
 - This word "filled" and "fullness" carry the idea of replete and running over (leave your water hose on).
 - God's love begins running over in your life.
2. When you realize you don't have to work to earn or deserve Christ's love, it will set you free and energize you to love God and love others like never before.
3. Christ will begin doing things **through you** that you could have never imagined.
vs. 20
 - There is no way God's love can be shared **through** you until you understand God's love **for** you.
 - As you grow deeper in Christ's love, you begin to share that love with others. It happens very naturally.

Our Church Motto

Growing deeper in the love of Christ that we may share that love with others.

A Church for Others: Ministry Abounds Romans 12:1-11

Introduction:

1. Did you know that you are not on this earth to simply consume space, oxygen, and resources? You are not on this earth simply for consumption, but for contribution.
2. Have you ever wondered why God didn't take you to heaven after you trusted Christ and entered His family? It is because God has a work for you to do.
3. When you were saved you became the recipient of every spiritual blessing that God has in Christ. You were the receiver, the “taker.”
4. God left you on this earth to give something back. What did the Thessalonian believers do after they were saved? They served! 1 Thessalonians 1:9
5. God has given you a new life in Christ and left you on this earth so you can have the opportunity and privilege of serving Him! God has a ministry for you!
6. What is ministry? It is very plain and simple. Ministry is giving to and serving others.
 - In Philippians 2:4, the word “*look*” means “to take aim at.”
 - What acts of ministry have you offered this past week? What have you done to be a blessing to someone else (you didn't get paid for it, you had no ulterior motives)?
7. In a church for others, the members of that local church have a ministry mindset. In a church for others, ministry abounds. Every believer should be actively engaged in ministry.
8. Why is it so crucial that every person be involved in ministry? This text will explain clearly.

First, every believer is saved to serve. vs. 1-2

1. In verse 1, Paul appeals to these believers to offer themselves to God and to get involved in serving. What is the basis of Paul's appeal? “...*by the mercies of God...*”
 - These people had experienced God's mercy and forgiveness. Paul says, “Is it not reasonable that you should serve this one who saved you?”
2. Notice the word “*reasonable*.” The Greek word for “*reasonable*” is “*logikos*.” This is the where we get our English word “*logic*.”
 - So Paul is saying, “Think it through logically and sensibly.”
 - Does not all reason and logic tell you that a life of service is due to the One who, in compassion and love, bore for us the shame and suffering that was **our** due?
3. If you have been saved by His mercy, you don't serve Him out of guilt, shame, or fear. You serve Him out of gratitude because you **want** to!
4. Any sacrifice we make can't compare to the sacrifice He made for us. Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice in death so I could be forgiven, restored to God, and live with Him forever.

5. Notice, Paul said that as we minister for God, it is a **living** sacrifice. Christ died for us so we could **live** unto Him. 2 Corinthians 5:15
6. In order for a person to humbly offer themselves to God and minister to others, it takes a mindset that is contrary to the world's thinking. The world's thinking is to look out for number one. It takes a renewed, transformed mind. vs. 2a
 - Satan's world system does not teach you to have a ministry mindset. It teaches you to serve your own lusts and pleasures. Titus 3:3
7. But here is the core issue: you will never experience the joy of God's will until you find your place of ministry. Vs. 2b cf. Ephesians 2:10 - You were saved to serve. It is the clearly revealed will of God that you be actively engaged in ministry.

Second, every believer is gifted to serve. Vs. 3-8

1. God likens the church to a human body. vs. 4-5
 - You have different members of your body with different functions, but they all **have** a function. When God made human bodies, He put every member of our body there for a reason and a purpose. Now let's read verses 4 and 5.
 - Do you see the divine illustration? If you know Christ as your Savior, you are part of this body, called the church.
2. When God places you in the body of the church, He expects you to **function**, not vegetate. "Vegetate" means "to lead a passive existence without exertion of body and mind."
 - What happens if I never use my legs? They not only will quit functioning, they will become a major hindrance for the rest of my body.
3. You are a part of Christ's body. Because God expects you to function as a contributing member of the body, God has gifted you to serve or minister. vs. 6
 - Let me clarify. People definitely have talents and abilities that they were born with or have developed over the years. God desires for you to use these also for His honor and glory.
 - But there are spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to us when we get saved that are specifically for spiritual use within the body of Christ.
 - These are gifts of God's grace. This is why verse 3 says that we shouldn't think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. It is all of His grace.
4. The purpose of your gifts is to be a blessing to others. They are not for your own self-edification, but for the edification of others. 1 Corinthians 14:12; 1 Peter 4:10
5. Once you are saved, picture yourself as a member of God's team.
 - God longs for you to be a contributing member of the team.
 - There is no worse feeling than being a member of a team and feeling like you have no value or importance to the team at all. Nobody wants to feel like they are taking up space and that they are totally irrelevant.
 - There is no reason for anybody to feel that way on God's team. You don't have to sit on the grandstands or on the sideline. You are gifted to serve,

and there is a place for you in this church. There are people serving right now as I speak (teens, security, nursery, etc.).

- You will not feel like a contributing member until you find your place of ministry.
6. The effectiveness of our church depends on the number of people who are involved in meaningful ministry.

A Church for Others: Ministry Abounds – Part 2 Romans 12:1-11

Introduction:

1. Did you know that you are not on this earth to simply consume space, oxygen, and resources? You are not on this earth simply for consumption, but for contribution.
2. Have you ever wondered why God didn't take you to heaven after you trusted Christ and entered His family? It is because God has a work for you to do.
3. When you were saved you became the recipient of every spiritual blessing that God has in Christ. You were the receiver, the “taker.”
4. God left you on this earth to give something back. What did the Thessalonian believers do after they were saved? They served! 1 Thessalonians 1:9
5. God has given you a new life in Christ and left you on this earth so you can have the opportunity and privilege of serving Him! God has a ministry for you!
6. What is ministry? It is very plain and simple. Ministry is giving to and serving others.
 - In Philippians 2:4, the word “*look*” means “to take aim at.”
 - What acts of ministry have you offered this past week? What have you done to be a blessing to someone else (you didn't get paid for it, you had no ulterior motives)?
7. In a church for others, the members of that local church have a ministry mindset. In a church for others, ministry abounds. Every believer should be actively engaged in ministry.
8. Why is it so crucial that every person be involved in ministry? This text will explain clearly.

First, every believer is saved to serve. vs. 1-2

1. In verse 1, Paul appeals to these believers to offer themselves to God and to get involved in serving. What is the basis of Paul's appeal? “...*by the mercies of God...*”
 - These people had experienced God's mercy and forgiveness. Paul says, “Is it not reasonable that you should serve this one who saved you?”
2. Notice the word “*reasonable*.” The Greek word for “*reasonable*” is “*logikos*.” This is the where we get our English word “*logic*.”
 - So Paul is saying, “Think it through logically and sensibly.”
 - Does not all reason and logic tell you that a life of service is due to the One who, in compassion and love, bore for us the shame and suffering that was **our** due?
3. If you have been saved by His mercy, you don't serve Him out of guilt, shame, or fear. You serve Him out of gratitude because you **want** to!
4. Any sacrifice we make can't compare to the sacrifice He made for us. Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice in death so I could be forgiven, restored to God, and live with Him forever.

5. Notice, Paul said that as we minister for God, it is a **living** sacrifice. Christ died for us so we could **live** unto Him. 2 Corinthians 5:15
6. In order for a person to humbly offer themselves to God and minister to others, it takes a mindset that is contrary to the world's thinking. The world's thinking is to look out for number one. It takes a renewed, transformed mind. vs. 2a
 - Satan's world system does not teach you to have a ministry mindset. It teaches you to serve your own lusts and pleasures. Titus 3:3
7. But here is the core issue: you will never experience the joy of God's will until you find your place of ministry. Vs. 2b cf. Ephesians 2:10 - You were saved to serve. It is the clearly revealed will of God that you be actively engaged in ministry.

Second, every believer is gifted to serve. Vs. 3-8

1. God likens the church to a human body. vs. 4-5
 - You have different members of your body with different functions, but they all **have** a function. When God made human bodies, He put every member of our body there for a reason and a purpose. Now let's read verses 4 and 5.
 - Do you see the divine illustration? If you know Christ as your Savior, you are part of this body, called the church.
2. When God places you in the body of the church, He expects you to **function**, not vegetate. "Vegetate" means "to lead a passive existence without exertion of body and mind."
 - What happens if I never use my legs? They not only will quit functioning, they will become a major hindrance for the rest of my body.
3. You are a part of Christ's body. Because God expects you to function as a contributing member of the body, God has gifted you to serve or minister. vs. 6
 - Let me clarify. People definitely have talents and abilities that they were born with or have developed over the years. God desires for you to use these also for His honor and glory.
 - But there are spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to us when we get saved that are specifically for spiritual use within the body of Christ.
 - These are gifts of God's grace. This is why verse 3 says that we shouldn't think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. It is all of His grace.
4. The purpose of your gifts is to be a blessing to others. They are not for your own self-edification, but for the edification of others. 1 Corinthians 14:12; 1 Peter 4:10
5. Once you are saved, picture yourself as a member of God's team.
 - God longs for you to be a contributing member of the team.
 - There is no worse feeling than being a member of a team and feeling like you have no value or importance to the team at all. Nobody wants to feel like they are taking up space and that they are totally irrelevant.
 - There is no reason for anybody to feel that way on God's team. You don't have to sit on the grandstands or on the sideline. You are gifted to serve,

and there is a place for you in this church. There are people serving right now as I speak (teens, security, nursery, etc.).

- You will not feel like a contributing member until you find your place of ministry.
6. The effectiveness of our church depends on the number of people who are involved in meaningful ministry.
 7. One of the problems in the modern-day American church is that whenever there is a need in the church, people have the rationale, “Let’s hire an outside professional to come in and meet the need.” So everybody sits around, while the “paid staff” run around like crazy trying to do the work of the ministry. That sounds like what you see on TV.
 - You see 22 men on a football field playing their hearts out, knocking their heads together, while about 100 others watch on the sidelines and about 60,000 others are in the grandstands yelling and screaming and second-guessing everything that happens.
 - This is not God’s plan for the local church.
 8. God gifts members of the local church (common, ordinary, everyday people), and then expects them to exercise those gifts for the furtherance and advancement of the church.
 9. God gifts certain people in the church with teaching and leadership gifts so that they can grow and mature the saints and prepare **them** for ministry.
Ephesians 4:11-16

A Church for Others: Ministry Abounds – Part 3 Romans 12:1-11

Introduction:

1. Did you know that you are not on this earth to simply consume space, oxygen, and resources? You are not on this earth simply for consumption, but for contribution.
2. Have you ever wondered why God didn't take you to heaven after you trusted Christ and entered His family? It is because God has a work for you to do.
3. When you were saved you became the recipient of every spiritual blessing that God has in Christ. You were the receiver, the “taker.”
4. God left you on this earth to give something back. What did the Thessalonian believers do after they were saved? They served! 1 Thessalonians 1:9
5. God has given you a new life in Christ and left you on this earth so you can have the opportunity and privilege of serving Him! God has a ministry for you!
6. What is ministry? It is very plain and simple. Ministry is giving to and serving others.
 - In Philippians 2:4, the word “*look*” means “to take aim at.”
 - What acts of ministry have you offered this past week? What have you done to be a blessing to someone else (you didn't get paid for it, you had no ulterior motives)?
7. In a church for others, the members of that local church have a ministry mindset. In a church for others, ministry abounds. Every believer should be actively engaged in ministry.
8. Why is it so crucial that every person be involved in ministry? This text will explain clearly.

First, every believer is saved to serve. vs. 1-2

1. In verse 1, Paul appeals to these believers to offer themselves to God and to get involved in serving. What is the basis of Paul's appeal? “...*by the mercies of God...*”
 - These people had experienced God's mercy and forgiveness. Paul says, “Is it not reasonable that you should serve this one who saved you?”
2. Notice the word “*reasonable*.” The Greek word for “*reasonable*” is “*logikos*.” This is the where we get our English word “*logic*.”
 - So Paul is saying, “Think it through logically and sensibly.”
 - Does not all reason and logic tell you that a life of service is due to the One who, in compassion and love, bore for us the shame and suffering that was **our** due?
3. If you have been saved by His mercy, you don't serve Him out of guilt, shame, or fear. You serve Him out of gratitude because you **want** to!
4. Any sacrifice we make can't compare to the sacrifice He made for us. Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice in death so I could be forgiven, restored to God, and live with Him forever.

5. Notice, Paul said that as we minister for God, it is a **living** sacrifice. Christ died for us so we could **live** unto Him. 2 Corinthians 5:15
6. In order for a person to humbly offer themselves to God and minister to others, it takes a mindset that is contrary to the world's thinking. The world's thinking is to look out for number one. It takes a renewed, transformed mind. vs. 2a
 - Satan's world system does not teach you to have a ministry mindset. It teaches you to serve your own lusts and pleasures. Titus 3:3
7. But here is the core issue: you will never experience the joy of God's will until you find your place of ministry. Vs. 2b cf. Ephesians 2:10 - You were saved to serve. It is the clearly revealed will of God that you be actively engaged in ministry.

Second, every believer is gifted to serve. Vs. 3-8

1. God likens the church to a human body. vs. 4-5
 - You have different members of your body with different functions, but they all **have** a function. When God made human bodies, He put every member of our body there for a reason and a purpose. Now let's read verses 4 and 5.
 - Do you see the divine illustration? If you know Christ as your Savior, you are part of this body, called the church.
2. When God places you in the body of the church, He expects you to **function**, not vegetate. "Vegetate" means "to lead a passive existence without exertion of body and mind."
 - What happens if I never use my legs? They not only will quit functioning, they will become a major hindrance for the rest of my body.
3. You are a part of Christ's body. Because God expects you to function as a contributing member of the body, God has gifted you to serve or minister. vs. 6
 - Let me clarify. People definitely have talents and abilities that they were born with or have developed over the years. God desires for you to use these also for His honor and glory.
 - But there are spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to us when we get saved that are specifically for spiritual use within the body of Christ.
 - These are gifts of God's grace. This is why verse 3 says that we shouldn't think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. It is all of His grace.
4. The purpose of your gifts is to be a blessing to others. They are not for your own self-edification, but for the edification of others. 1 Corinthians 14:12; 1 Peter 4:10
5. Once you are saved, picture yourself as a member of God's team.
 - God longs for you to be a contributing member of the team.
 - There is no worse feeling than being a member of a team and feeling like you have no value or importance to the team at all. Nobody wants to feel like they are taking up space and that they are totally irrelevant.
 - There is no reason for anybody to feel that way on God's team. You don't have to sit on the grandstands or on the sideline. You are gifted to serve,

and there is a place for you in this church. There are people serving right now as I speak (teens, security, nursery, etc.).

- You will not feel like a contributing member until you find your place of ministry.
6. The effectiveness of our church depends on the number of people who are involved in meaningful ministry.
 7. One of the problems in the modern-day American church is that whenever there is a need in the church, people have the rationale, “Let’s hire an outside professional to come in and meet the need.” So everybody sits around, while the “paid staff” run around like crazy trying to do the work of the ministry. That sounds like what you see on TV.
 - You see 22 men on a football field playing their hearts out, knocking their heads together, while about 100 others watch on the sidelines and about 60,000 others are in the grandstands yelling and screaming and second-guessing everything that happens.
 - This is not God’s plan for the local church.
 8. God gifts members of the local church (common, ordinary, everyday people), and then expects them to exercise those gifts for the furtherance and advancement of the church.
 9. God gifts certain people in the church with teaching and leadership gifts so that they can grow and mature the saints and prepare **them** for ministry.
Ephesians 4:11-16
 - Once they prepare them, they turn them loose and let them minister! Coaches prepare players to **play**! Players don’t sit around and watch the coaches play. But this is how many churches operate.
 10. The apostle Paul lists these team gifts in verses 6-8.
 - Prophecy - This gift deals with the proclamation of God’s truth. Some people have the gift of proclaiming, explaining, and applying God’s Word.
 - Ministry - This is the gift of working behind the scenes, performing necessary jobs, manual tasks, doing whatever it takes to help and get the job done.
 - Teaching - This is the gift of communicating and clarifying the details of God’s Word in such a way that others will learn.
 - Exhortation - This is the gift of encouraging and challenging others to follow God’s Word.
 - Giving - This is a strong desire to give and share of your material resources to further the work of God.
 - Ruling - This is the gift of leading, organizing, and administering ministries and people.
 - Showing mercy - This is the gift of ministering to those who are sick, suffering, or afflicted.
 11. Here are a few important principles about these gifts:
 - You don’t earn these gifts, otherwise they wouldn’t be called gifts. They are gifts of God’s grace given to us by God’s Holy Spirit.
 - These gifts aren’t for you; they are for the edification of others. They are given for the purpose of ministry.

- You must grow and develop your gifts. Just like a baby doesn't come out of the womb full-grown, but has the capacity to grow, your spiritual gifts provide you a capacity to serve. It is your responsibility to grow in Christ.
 - Illustration: You don't get saved on Sunday, and Monday morning you wake up and you are a deep teacher of God's Word. You must develop that gift.
 - Never confuse spiritual gifts with spiritual responsibility. Many of the gifts are spiritual graces that every believer has a responsibility to develop and grow. Some believers will excel in these areas, challenging and teaching us.
12. God has gifted you to serve Him. What does this mean? It means that it is God's will for every believer to edify and build up others through ministry. Ministry is very natural and normal for the true believer.

Third, every believer is commanded to serve. vs. 9-11

1. After talking about the different team gifts in verses 7 and 8, Paul begins in verse 9 to give a series of short, concise commands for us to obey.
2. Notice that we are commanded to **fervently** serve the Lord. It is not a suggestion, but a clear-cut command. Not only are we to do it, but we are to approach this thing of ministry with fervency and great intensity. "Fervent" means "to be red hot and glowing."
3. So, this idea of serving and ministering is not optional for the believer. None of us are going to get an exemption.
4. Let's read an absolutely incredible passage from the life of Christ on earth.
Matthew 20:26-28
 - Jesus has commanded us to serve, yet He set the example.
 - If anyone would be exempt from serving, it would be Christ. He was God in the flesh, yet Philippians 2:7 says, "*He made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant...*"
 - If Christ did not consider Himself exempt from serving, then you and I certainly are not.
5. When we examine the life of Christ, we see clearly that serving God really means serving others. Galatians 5:13 says, "*by love serve one another.*"
 - The way we serve God is by serving others.
 - In Matthew 25:35-40 the time context is the tribulation, but there is a powerful principle that we see and learn. When you serve others, you are serving Christ.
 - Paul served the Lord in Ephesus. But what did this service look like? He was helping and ministering to people! Acts 20:18-20
6. You can't be like Jesus if you are not serving. It is that simple. If we are going to demonstrate Christ in our daily walk, we must be actively engaged in ministry.

In Conclusion:

1. Serving God is a choice. In verse 1 Paul said, “*I beseech you...*” This literally means, “I beg of you.” God will not **make** you serve Him. It is a definite act of your free will.
2. But, one day you will stand before God and give account for your life. God will evaluate what you did to serve others with the gifts, talents, abilities, mind, health, and material resources that you had here on earth.
3. Can you imagine on that day God saying to us, “I saved you to serve, I gifted you to serve, I commanded you to serve, and I even came to earth and set the example for you?”
4. What excuse could you and I possibly have on that day that will hold up?
5. You will never know the thrill of impacting lives, and we will not become a church for others, until each member is actively engaged in ministry.
6. One of the greatest decisions that you could ever make is to find your place of ministry and service for the Lord.

A Church for Others
“Reaching Out Through Sacrificial Giving”
Philippians 4:10-19

Introduction:

1. As we have examined what it means to be a church for others, we have discovered that it takes unconditional love for people, the proclamation of truth, hearts that are growing, and people who truly desire to minister.
2. But there is another key element in a local congregation becoming a church for others. Are you ready for this? It takes people who are reaching out through their sacrificial giving. This makes sense, doesn't it?
3. Here is the brutal reality: ministry takes money! This is true now, it always has been true, and it always will be true. Let's turn to Philippians 4:10-19.
4. As Paul ministered for the Lord, he had financial needs (vs. 16). How were those needs met? God did not float down money out of heaven for Paul. It came through the sacrificial giving of God's people.
5. This local church at Philippi gave sacrificially of their monies so that Paul could continue the work of the ministry. This is God's plan, pure and simple. Every believer should be growing in the grace of giving. Why is this so crucial?

First, sacrificial giving reflects godly contentment. vs. 10-12

1. This was a very giving church, but for a while it seems that they lacked opportunity to give. vs. 10
2. Most of the time, a lack of opportunity is not our problem. Today, we face a different problem in America: a lack of contentment. vs. 11
 - In our society, contentment is not the norm. In our modern-day culture, enough is never enough. Everybody wants a little bit more. What is the tenth of the Ten Commandments? *“Thou shalt not covet.”* cf. 1 Timothy 6:9-10
 - Covetousness is what leads to discontentment, but giving is God's designed way to guard our hearts against the black hole of covetousness.
3. Paul said that he had **learned** contentment. God had taught him this through the ups and downs of life. vs. 12
 - Contentment **doesn't** mean that you never get a better car, or you never try to improve the condition of your home, or never get new clothes.
 - Contentment **does** mean that you will willingly give up those things if those things are going to prevent you from being able to give sacrificially.
 - It is very hard to give sacrificially when we are paying sacrificially for all our material possessions.
4. Contentment means that your joy isn't based on materialistic prosperity, but your joy is derived from Christ living and giving through you. vs. 13
 - As we give each week to the Lord, it is a constant reminder that it's not all about us; it is about God and what God is doing in light of eternity.

5. Sacrificial givers have learned the glorious secret of contentment and are helping their church become a church for others through their Christ-like giving.

Second, sacrificial giving allows the gospel of Christ to advance. vs. 15-16

1. The apostle Paul was all about sharing with people the good news of Jesus Christ. But according to the Bible, Paul had financial needs. vs. 15-16
2. Why is this? It's because money is necessary for ministry. It takes money to sustain ministry.
3. God used these believers to meet the financial needs for ministry (vs. 18). They gave and the need was met and the gospel moved forward, changing lives.
 - When Paul was in Macedonia, they gave sacrificially. What was the result?
 - As we read in Acts, in Thessalonica a great multitude of Greeks believed on Christ (17:4), in Berea many believed (17:12), in Athens certain men clave unto him and believed, and in Corinth many hearing, believed. 18:8
4. How does God meet the needs for ministry? He does it through His children's sacrificial giving. This is God's plan, and when people are obedient, it is more than enough to meet the financial needs of the church. CrossRoads is a faith-based ministry. What does this mean?
 - It means that we aren't charging people for ministry and we aren't selling anything, but rather we are relying solely on the giving of our people to meet the needs of this ministry. Without people's giving, ministry simply doesn't happen.
 - In a church for others, the people realize that they must give if the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ are going to advance.

Third, sacrificial giving brings heavenly reward.

1. According to verse 18, did God see their sacrificial giving? What effect did their sacrificial giving have on God? It was "*wellpleasing!*" It was like a sweet fragrance to God. God certainly noticed their giving, didn't He?
2. But now let's look at verse 17. This is teaching that these Christians **shared** in Paul's ministry through their sacrificial giving. Everything Paul accomplished, they had a hand in, and it was abounding to their accounts in heaven.
3. It was laying up eternal treasure for them that they will enjoy for all of eternity.
 - Paul basically was saying, "I didn't want your money for **me**, I wanted it for ministry because I know that my ministry will bring forth fruit that will abound to your account in heaven."
4. When you give to CrossRoads, you are sharing in all the spiritual fruit that happens around here. It abounds to your heavenly account.
 - Have you ever noticed how big \$100 looks when you take it to church and how small it looks when you take it to the mall or amusement park? You spend it, you enrich the amusement park, and then it's gone.

- But when you give to the Lord's work, there is not only an earthly benefit as souls are impacted, but there is also an eternal dividend that lasts forever. You enjoy the benefits for eternity. 1 Timothy 6:18-19
5. We see from this text that God notices our sacrificial gifts. It truly touches His heart. In fact, it is in this context that the great promise of verse 19 comes.

In Conclusion:

1. According to this passage, there are three keys to becoming a sacrificial giver:
 - Make a personal decision. vs. 15
 - The generous giver gives whether anyone else does or not.
 - Make it a regular practice. vs. 10, 16
 - There was a pattern to their giving. They weren't one-time givers. They didn't simply give when there happened to be a big surplus. No, they had a habit of giving. It was a practice in their lives.
 - And the same is true of us. Giving should be a normal and continual part of our lives.
 - Trust Christ to give through you. vs. 13
 - You can't do it, but Christ can do it through you. He gives us the ability to shed the cultural trappings of materialism and greed.
 - If you are saved, Christ lives in you and He is the ultimate sacrificial giver!
2. A church for others is reaching out through sacrificial giving, and its members are striving to grow in the wonderful grace of giving.

A Church for Others
“A Spirit of Servanthood Abounds”
Philippians 2:5-8

Introduction:

1. Do you consider yourself a follower of Jesus Christ? What is a local church, biblically? It is a group of people who are united by their faith in Jesus Christ and their desire to follow Him. Do you desire to be a follower of Jesus Christ?
2. A well-known verse is 1 Peter 2:21, which talks about following in the steps of Christ.
 - We think of following Christ in terms of action (what I do, how I act, what I say, where I go).
 - Many times we think, “I have to discipline myself to act like Christ and imitate Him.”
3. But remember, attitude is what determines action.
4. If we want to be followers of Christ, the starting place is Philippians 2:5.
 - It begins with right thinking, and the right attitude.
 - This is what determines what kind of person you will be and what kind of behavior you will display.
5. What is the mind of Christ? According to Philippians 2:6-8, it is a spirit of **servanthood**.
6. This attitude is the key to everything in our lives (marriage, relationships, friendships, work, church, parenting, etc.). It is also the key to any church becoming a church for others. There is absolutely no way for our church to become a church for others if our members do not possess the mind of Christ: a spirit of servanthood.
7. Every believer must possess a spirit of servanthood like our Savior. When a person possesses a spirit of servanthood, what does it look like? Philippians 2:6-8 has the answer.

First, a team spirit

1. As I've said before, the church is very much like a team. On any team, there are two different kinds of members:
 - Team players - It's all about the team winning and accomplishing its goals.
 - Me players - It's all about me and my individual goals, my stats, my position, and how I look.
2. Jesus was the ultimate team player!
 - Notice verses 6-7. This means that Christ wasn't on the right hand of the Father, hanging on to His position, His glory, and His privileges.
 - Jesus forsook the worship of the saints and angels in heaven; He left the glories of heaven and came to the earth to suffer and ultimately die.
 - Why did He do this? He did it for the good of the team.

- It wasn't about His glory, His comfort, and His position. It was about bringing other people to glory. He laid aside His privileges for the good of others. Hebrews 2:9-10
3. Are you a team player? Would other people characterize you this way at work, at home, and at church?
 4. The opposite of a team spirit is a spirit of selfishness.
 5. "A Christ-like spirit of servanthood" means "a team spirit."

Second, a humble spirit

1. We don't like pride when we see it in others, but sometimes we can be blind to our **own** pride. Someone said that pride is a strange disease; it makes everyone sick except the person who has it.
2. The Bible says that Christ humbled Himself. A spirit of servanthood always shows up as a humble spirit. Philippians 2:3
 - Humility is an attitude of the mind and heart. It starts within and works its way out.
 - Humility is a freedom from arrogance. "*Vainglory*" carries the idea of "an exaggerated self view; a person in love with himself; conceited."
3. Humility is a recognition that all that we have, and all that we are, comes from God.
 - Pride says, "It is all about me and what I want."
 - Humility says, "It's all about God and His will." This is why Christ died for our sins. It was the Father's will.
4. A spirit of humility says, "How can I serve others, be a blessing to others, and minister to others?"
 - A spirit of pride says, "How can others make me happy, help me, and serve me? How can I get others to do what I want them to do?"
5. A spirit of arrogance destroys relationships.
 - An arrogant, prideful spirit has destroyed many more marriages than alcohol or drugs. It is what destroys friendships and churches. Proverbs 13:10
6. If you are God's child, God is working to develop a Christ-like spirit of humility in you. God can't use prideful people. 1 Peter 5:5
7. I know that in our flesh we tend to hate and despise trials and problems, but God can take those adverse circumstances and work through them to correct a pride problem.
8. "A Christ-like spirit of servanthood" means "a humble spirit."

Third, an obedient spirit

1. Have you ever been around kids that won't listen? Aren't they a joy to be around? Those kids grow up into adults, and most of the time they don't listen any better as adults than they did as kids.
2. This is why many of us struggle with having a spirit of servanthood. We are accustomed to getting our own way. How does this translate into life's situations?

- People bounce from job to job, church to church, friendship to friendship, and marriage to marriage.
- A rebellious and unsubmitive spirit is a terrible thing.
3. If anybody had a right to go His own way and do His own thing, it was Christ. Yet look at verse 8. He became "*obedient unto death.*"
 - This word "obedient" means "attentively listening; submissive."
 - Christ's spirit of servanthood showed in that He listened and was submissive to the Father, even to the point of death.
 4. Are you ready and waiting to listen and obey when God speaks to you through His Word?

In Conclusion:

1. Think about this. If a Christ-like spirit of servanthood abounded in you, what impact would this have on your home life, your marriage, your church, your work place, your friendships, etc.?
2. Remember, your attitude determines your actions. Do you exhibit the mind of Christ? The mind of Christ is one of servanthood, and a spirit of servanthood means:
 - A team spirit
 - A humble spirit
 - An obedient spirit
3. Satan will say to you, "Look out for number one, do your own thing, get what you want, it is all about you, you're the man, nobody's going to tell you what to do," etc.
4. But remember, Satan is a liar. This is not the way of Christ. It is not the mind of Christ. The end of Satan's lies is destruction, misery, contention, and strife.
5. But where does a spirit of servanthood lead? Look at the example of Christ. vs. 9-11; cf. 1 Peter 5:6