



Service

It's About Allowing God to Use You

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 5:16

"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

Running Sheet For Programme

Please note, these are approximate times and assume an 11:00 am start. To keep the programme flowing you will want the next person or group to be coming up as the previous group is finishing.

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 10:50 | Prelude music |
| 11:00 | 3 songs |
| 11:09 | Welcome/Announcements |
| 11:13 | Offering – collected by children |
| | Suggestion: during offering collection, which of course is taken up by the children, data projector slides of the church family worshipping, families from your church having family worship, parent's reading Bible stories to children etc – different ways of worshipping God. You could tape/video children explaining how they like worship with their families |
| 11:18 | Item - SS groups, solo, duet or trio |
| 11:21 | Prayer – Two children, followed by silent prayer |
| 11:24 | Sermonette 1 |
| 11:28 | Reader's Theatre |
| 11:31 | Sermonette 2 |
| 11:35 | Video clips or interviews |
| 11:41 | Sermonette 3 |
| 11:45 | Sermonette 4 |
| 11:49 | Drama – A Caring Guy |
| 11:55 | Sermonette 5 |
| 11:59 | Closing Song – <i>You Said</i> or <i>Take My Life</i> |
| 12:02 | Children's Ministry Person to explain the vouchers, thank children for their work and closing prayer |
| 12:05 | Postlude |

Programme Outline

Make, in advance, letters that spell out the word SERVICE from Styrofoam or hardboard and paint it bright colours. Lay it down on the floor at the front of the church. Before the welcome have one child walk up the front with a hammer and begin working on the letters. Other children join him/her to help work on the letters (pretending to saw, hammer etc). While the children continue to work on the letters another child comes up to begin the welcome. As the child begins talking all but 7 children return to their seats. As the welcomer says the bold words from the script the children stand up the letters (ie when the child says SO they stand up the letter S).

Welcome Script

We are **SO** glad that you came to our church service today.

EVERYONE involved in this programme today is a child from our congregation.

We'd **REALLY** like to take this opportunity to welcome you here today and please give a **VERY** warm welcome to the people sitting near to you.

I'D like to let you know what is going on around our church this week (church appropriate announcements).

I'm sure that you can **SEE** the letter's going up behind me. They spell out what our theme for today is...we are looking at **SERVICE** (children put up the last letter) and why it is important to help. After all, we are all God's children so why wouldn't we want to help our neighbours because they are really our brothers and sisters.

Offering

Organise the children to be the Deacons this week. Maybe you could collect the offering in something different rather than the usual offering plates. Use children for music during offering. While offering is being collected show pictures of members of your church family serving others in different community service projects or helping other church members in need. Alternatively, show data projector pics of the children in your church.

Item

During the offering is a good time to get a group of children assembled up the front ready to begin their item as soon as the offering is finished. You can choose from songs listed at the end of the programme or the children might prefer to share some of the songs that they are doing in Sabbath School. Adults love to hear what the children are singing in Sabbath School. Often they will have sung many of the songs themselves and will enjoy hearing them again.

Prayer

Choose two children to write and say a prayer. Give them guidelines of what to cover such as praying for the sick in the church, for the people who don't know Jesus and for everyone here today. Then have one of the children say: *We'd now like you to say a silent prayer for someone who you would like to be a special light to and ask God how you can be of service to them.*

(Give the congregation one minute then send up the child with the first sermon to begin straight away.)

Additional Ideas

Act out song *Thankyou* by Ray Boltz.

Play song *Thankyou* by Ray Boltz while showing pictures of people in your church serving.

Interview people who serve and let them explain why it is so good to help.

Sermonette 1

You Are Called To Serve

In Matthew 5:16 Jesus says *“Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”* What does it mean to let your light shine before others? Well, Jesus goes on to explain many times that letting your light shine involves serving others. In fact Jesus talks more about serving other people than any other topic. One of the reasons you were created was to serve God and other people. Today we want you to think about what it means to serve God in your home, your church, your community and world.

Serving is all about putting others ahead of yourself. Jesus summed it up when He said that the first shall be last and the last first. These words sound a bit odd to us. We love to win and have things our way. We think ‘me first’ and that to be number one we have to get ahead or put others down. 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. While we might be happy for a little while putting ourselves first, deep down happiness comes from putting other people ahead of ourselves. Just like Jesus puts you and me first – it’s incredible to think the God of the Universe came to serve you and me – He asks us to do the same for each other.

How often do you let someone go first in a supermarket line when you’re both heading for the same checkout at the same time? When was the last time you helped a neighbour in their yard for no big reason? Closer to home, when was the last time you said “I would love to put the rubbish out”, even when it’s not your turn, or how do you think your mum would respond if you said “I would be honoured to do the dishes.” Jesus said that when we do these kinds of things people will see God reflected through us and glorify him.

Servants think more about others than about themselves. When you have a servant’s heart people are more valuable than things. When we stop focusing on our own selfish needs we become aware of the needs around us. The Bible says that Jesus ‘emptied himself and took the form of a servant’. This was not because the task was so appealing, it wasn’t, but because He loved His children (you and me and every other person) so much. People matter to God and because they matter to Him they must matter to you and me as well. We are to serve others because Jesus served others and asks us to do the same.

If serving is such a great thing then why isn’t everyone eager to serve each other? What stops us serving? Simply, we just get too caught up with our own things and thinking about what we want. We think about our own stuff rather than what the world is like for someone else. This way of living can make us very selfish and blind to the needs of people around us. We rush past opportunities to be Jesus’ hands. We do not have eyes that seek out the needs of people around us. Being a servant is about looking outside of our own needs to others, not for what they can give us or how they can help us get ahead but because, like us, they are also valuable to God. Like us, they are God’s children.

Some people don’t serve because they think they may not be appreciated. Well sometimes you won’t be appreciated, sometimes you might get taken for granted. However, Jesus tells us to keep on serving anyway. Remember that for Jesus a cup of water for a little child is a big deal.

Maybe we can’t be bothered serving – it’s just too much hassle.

Maybe we are selfish and want all the glory for ourselves.

Maybe we are too busy thinking about ourselves.

Maybe we don’t care about other people and don’t take the time to get to know them.

Think about your heart right now and let’s do a heart check. Is it a servant’s heart? If not, then pray for God to open the eyes of your heart. Think about the people you know and then put their needs over yours.

Sometimes people will take advantage of our servant’s heart or be unappreciative, however Jesus says to serve anyway as through you they might see Him. For the most part however, what relationships most need is someone willing to take the first step, climb off the high horse and serve. It can transform whole homes, churches and communities.

Paul says in Romans 12:1, *“In view of what God has done for you, offer yourselves as a ‘living sacrifice.’* This is about dying to self and serving God. God wants to use you to make a difference in the world. He wants to work through you to serve others. What’s stopping you?

Points to include if you are writing your own sermonette

1. *One of the reasons you were created was to serve God and other people.*
2. *Serving is all about putting others ahead of yourself.*
3. *When you have a servant’s heart people are more valuable than things.*
4. *Being a servant is about looking outside of our own needs to others, not for what they can give us or how they can help us get ahead but because, like us, they are also valuable to God. Like us, they are God’s children.*
5. *Sometimes people will take advantage of our servant’s heart or be unappreciative, however Jesus says to serve anyway as through you they might see Him.*

Readers Theatre

- Child 1** You are blessed
- Child 2** when you have worked up a good appetite for God.
- Child 3** His food and drink is the best meal you'll ever eat.
- Child 1** You are blessed
- Child 2** when you care.
- Child 3** At the moment of being care-full you find yourselves cared for.
- Child 2** You are here
- Child 1** to be salt,
- Child 3** the seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth.
- Child 1** If you are not salty, how will people taste godliness?
- Child 3** You are here
- Child 2** to be light,
- Child 1** to shine godliness to those around you.
- Child 2** Keep your house open and be generous with your lives.
- Child 3** By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up to God.
- Child 1** If you spend your time feeding the hungry and helping people in need then you will be like a light in the darkness that shines as the noonday sun to those around you.
- Child 2** People will be drawn to you like a moth to a flame
- All** and you will point them to God.
- Child 1** Matthew 5:13-16; Isaiah 58:10.

Sermonette 2

Serving In Your Home

Being a servant starts with the people you live with. Your home is the perfect place to reflect God's light. Would your mum and dad, brothers and sisters, flatmates, husband/wife, children, and in-laws say that you have a servant's heart? Would they say you serve more than you want to be served? Even if you live by yourself, you are still called to serve your wider family and the people around you.

Serving might mean doing a chore before being nagged or even when it's not your responsibility. Placing encouraging notes or small gifts in places where they will be later found and brighten someone's day. Being appreciative of the things people do for you that over time we might just take for granted and even treat as our right. It might mean being the person to change the toilet roll as opposed to leaving the last smallest piece. Get creative and think through ways you can be a light to the people who are closest to you.

The Apostle Paul said: *"But anyone who won't care for his own relatives when they need help, especially those living in his own family, has no right to say he is a Christian and is worse than an unbeliever."* Timothy 5:8.

Another way you can serve in your home is by having friends over – and even more than that, having people over who are not even your friends yet. Jesus said that in caring for and offering hospitality to strangers we are really doing this for Him (Matthew 25:35). Hebrews 13:2 says that sometimes we might even be serving angels unaware. Because we live in a world that is ruined by sin, having strangers over to our house might not always be safe, so make sure you have some other people with you – kids, check with your parents or grown up before you start inviting. Maybe you can start by looking after people in your street who you might not know very well yet. Jesus said: When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Luke 14:13-14.

The whole idea is not so much about how much food you have but rather the attitude of your heart. Solomon said *"better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf where there is hatred."* Proverbs 15:17. The gift of friendship is one of the greatest acts of service that we can offer and there is no shortage of people needing friends in our world. The thing is, as we offer friendship we gain more friends.

Don't wait for someone else to start serving – you start serving in your home from this moment on. Going all out to serve in the home can actually turn into a whole lot of fun. Go on, shine God's light in your home right now – the changes might just surprise you.

Points to include if you are writing your own sermonette

1. *Your home is the perfect place to reflect God's light.*
2. *Get creative and think through ways you can be a light to the people who are closest to you.*
3. *The gift of friendship is one of the greatest acts of service that we can offer and there is no shortage of people needing friends in our world.*

Video Clip interviews or interviews of children in your church family briefly describing or showing how they serve around the home.

Sermonette 3

Serving In Your Church

What does it mean to serve in God's church? Another word for serving in the church is ministry. You and I are all called to be ministers. Every believer has been given unique passions, gifts and abilities that Christ calls us to use in making the church more effective. When we combine our service together the church becomes a shining light in the community. Each of us has a part to play and if we neglect that part or do not give it our best shot we are not just robbing each other, but robbing God and the impact of our church body. Ephesians 4:11-12 says that *"It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."*

The Bible describes the church working as a body (Ephesians 4, Romans 12). Every part of the body matters. What happens when a part of your body decides not to do its job? The rest of the body suffers. What if your liver decided to start living for itself saying: 'I'm tired of what I do around here – I don't want to serve in this body any more – I want a year off to be fed – I've got to do what's best for me.' What would happen? Your body would die. Today lots of churches are dying because of people who are unwilling, for various reasons, to serve. They sit on the sidelines while the body suffers.

God created us to be good at different things, and no one is good at everything. This is how God wanted it to be so we would all need to work together if things are to work best. God made each of us to care about different things, be good at different things and be excited about different things so together we can serve in a body that shows the world what can happen when we work together. Even more than this, Paul reminds us that God gives us spiritual gifts. Paul says understanding spiritual gifts is very important for the church body. What is a spiritual gift you might ask? A spiritual gift is a special ability given to you by God, through the Holy Spirit, that is to make the church a better church and bring Glory to God. This means God has designed each of us to do something special in the body of Christ 'the church'.

Here's the thing – we all have a spiritual gift and God has designed you in a special way to use your gift. If you don't know your gift, or if you're not using it then the church misses out, you miss out and God misses out by not having the part happen that he made you for. If you don't know your gift then you need to find out. Talk to one of the Elders or Pastors about how you can get involved in ministry.

Once again, serving in the church means caring more about others than yourself. Rather than looking at the church and asking if your needs are being met, what about spending some time thinking of ways you can meet the needs of others – and then doing them.

If you're not involved in any serving in the church, what excuse have you been using? Abraham was old, Jacob was insecure, Leah was unattractive, Joseph was abused, Moses stuttered, Gideon was poor, Rahab was immoral, while David had all sorts of family problems. Jeremiah was depressed, Jonah was reluctant, Peter impulsive, Zacchaeus was unpopular, Thomas had doubts, Paul had poor health. The Bible includes a huge variety of what we might call 'misfits', but God used each one in His service. He will use you too, if you allow Him.

Points to include if you are writing your own sermonette

1. *Another word for serving in the church is ministry.*
2. *Every believer has been given unique passions, gifts and abilities that Christ calls us to use in making the church more effective.*
3. *The Bible describes the church working as a body.*
4. *God created us to be good at different things, and no one is good at everything.*
5. *Rather than looking at the church and asking if your needs are being met, what about spending some time thinking of ways you can meet the needs of others – and then doing them.*

Sermonette 4

Serving In Your Community

Whenever you serve others in any way, you are actually serving God. (Colossians 3:23-24; Matthew 25:34-45). Serving our community is a very big deal for God. He gives us hearts to care about what He would care about. Hands to hold the people He wants us to hold, eyes to see the needs that break His heart and feet to go and make a difference.

In Luke 10:25-37 Jesus tells the story that we have called the Good Samaritan. A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was robbed, beaten and left for dead. A Priest walked past but moved to the other side of the road. A Levite did the same. Both men were, by name, followers of God and that should have resulted in them seeing an opportunity for serving. However, selfishness overruled – they just wanted to get to where they were going rather than stop, maybe get a little bit of blood on them, but help someone in need. Next a Samaritan came past. The Samaritans were shunned in society and out of the three would be expected to be the least likely to help. The Samaritan in fact bandages the wounds of the beaten man, puts him on his donkey, arranges accommodation and takes care of the man. Jesus ends the story with “Go and do likewise.”

The story of the Good Samaritan teaches that true love for God will show itself in caring for the needs of others. By using a Samaritan as the one who helped, Jesus makes the point that concern for others is not limited to background, race or religion. Being a true neighbour is about taking time to step out of your busy life and serve others – whoever they are. All around us are people who have been robbed of dignity and dreams and beaten by life. You and I have the choice to stop or walk right by. No one saw the Priest and Levite walk right by, however the God of the universe says He cares about every single time one of His children stops to help another.

In order to serve the beaten stranger, the Samaritan had to step out of his own agenda. Serving in our community is about having eyes, ears and a heart that is focused outward. We need to serve beyond our homes and church and shine in our wider community. We are asked to step out of our comfortable lives and touch peoples lives – for no other reason than that Jesus did.

God knows the hearts and needs of our community. Ask Him to show those needs to you as you step out to serve. Maybe this means that this week you will take the time to stop and talk with the unpopular or new kid at school or the lonely person at your work. Maybe it's time to drop some extra groceries to the family you know must be struggling. Maybe it's time to talk to the old lady who has lost her husband and spends most days alone. Maybe it's time to stop and talk to the beggar who pushes all they own in a shopping trolley – what would it take to provide a meal? Remember each one of these people is a child of God, like you, and someone who Jesus gave everything for. He calls you and me to reach out and serve them.

Points to include if you are writing your own sermonette

1. Whenever you serve others in any way, you are actually serving God.
2. True love for God will show itself in caring for the needs of others.
3. Every person is a child of God, like you, and someone who Jesus gave everything for. He calls you and me to reach out and serve them.

Drama - A Caring Guy

Props

Television, pizza box, lounge chair, ironing, ironing board and iron.

Characters

Husband and wife.

Voice overs

Newsreader and Commercial Reader.

Scene: Husband is sitting in front of TV, pizza box on his lap, McDonald's cartons sitting on the floor. Wife is ironing behind him.

Newsreader Tonight on Prime News the cold snap continues to grip (insert state) and we have a special report on (insert state)'s homeless. Good Evening. The cold weather sweeping the state is taking its toll, especially among older members of the community. Aid agencies are particularly in need of blankets. (fading out) if anyone can...

Husband Hey honey – all our blankets are being used on the spare beds aren't they?

Wife I think so

Husband Thought so (takes a bite of pizza)

Newsreader Police today were alerted just in time to a situation in the (insert state) town of (insert town). A neighbour notified police that mail had been accumulating for several days at an elderly gentleman's home. Upon entering the home Police found the man unconscious. It appears he fell several days ago, (fading out) Neighbours say that...

Husband Poor fellow – why wasn't someone looking after him?

Wife I guess we should drop in on Mum more often.

Husband I often glance at her place when I go past on my way to work, I'd probably notice if the mail was building up.

Wife She seems happy to see us every Christmas and we do drop in on Mother's Day.

Newsreader After the break, our report.

Commercial Reader Today 40,000 children are starving, you can make a difference by becoming a child sponsor. Your donation will (fade out) make a difference not only...

Husband Oooww, there should be some sort of law stopping this sort of thing being shown at tea time. These aid agencies just don't know when to stop.

Wife I'm sure they make it worse than it is.

Newsreader Tonight in our special report we look at *(insert state)*'s homeless. *(fade out)* Every night on our streets...

Husband Well look at these useless good for nothings. What must tourists think when they see these people on our streets. When I left work today this shabby, smelly old lady came right up and asked me for some money for tea. They're not my problem. I pay my taxes to look after them.

Wife They shouldn't be allowed to do it.

Newsreader Tonight in Sporting News. The *(insert popular sporting team)* face a financial crisis and are appealing to their supporters for donations *(fading out)* General Manager of the...

Husband Honey go and grab the cheque book. I'll do my part for the community.

Wife *(wife hands cheque book to husband and pats him on the shoulder)* You are such a caring guy at heart.

Newsreader Updating weather. It's going to be another cold one tonight for...

Sermonette 5

Serving Your World

You only have to watch a few minutes of the news or pick up a paper to see that we live in a world of desperate need. Natural disasters are happening at an increasing rate. People are left without homes and food. While the Bible tells us that because of sin we are to expect these things it also tells us that our job is not to just watch but actually do something to help.

Somewhere in our world a person dies of hunger every two seconds. This is not people dying in need of special medicine but just for the need of food – any food. In the time we've been in our service today over 1,800 people will have died simply of hunger. Right now in Bangladesh parents are waking with no breakfast for their kids and heading off to the rubbish tip to scavenge for what little food there is. Somewhere today a child will wake up to another day as a slave in a coco bean plantation working to supply our world with chocolate. UNICEF estimates that we have at least 27 million child slaves in our world right now.

You and I are fortunate enough to live in a country where we have choices. Answer these questions.

- Do you have more than one pair of shoes?
- Do you have more than one choice about what you will eat for a meal?
- Do you have access to your own transport, even if it is a bike?
- Do you have more than one set of underwear?

If you can answer yes to three of the above questions then by the world's standards you're very wealthy. Fewer than 10% of the world can answer yes to three of these questions. We say which shoes, what brand of food, which label of clothes while most of the world would never dream about the sights we see in our own pantry.

You don't need to be told more facts. Chances are you've been numbed by the countless ads on the TV depicting desperate need. The sad thing is that we forget that this whole tragedy is happening on our planet at this very moment. If we feel anything at all, then it is a sense of being overwhelmed by the massive numbers. We feel as though there is nothing we can really do. It is just too big. The sights of desperate people become just another add.

Singer/Songwriter Margaret Becker wrote this after a trip to Kenya. "With my own two eyes I have seen what money – money that we leave on our night table, money that we cast into a jar somewhere as we tidy up – can do. Hungry, sickly people do exist; there is a devastating force of poverty vying for their lives. They smile, they laugh, they cry. And if you are doing something to alleviate hunger, they hold on to your hand for dear life. Your hand is life, your hand is hope, your hand is Jesus' hand."

The Bible has more to say about looking after people than on any other theme. James 1:27 says: "Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world pollute us".

But what can you do? Don't corrupt governments take the money you send and use it for weapons? Don't the leaders of the countries we see on TV in desperate need live in luxury? Sometimes, yes. However there are things we can do.

-What would it take for you to give an encouraging smile and thank you to the immigrant who pumps your petrol - who is desperately trying to make a new life in a new country?

-What would it take to arrange a food parcel for a family at church or in your area who find it hard to make ends meet?

-What would it take to give money you don't even really need to ADRA. We can be thankful that we belong to a church that coordinates one of the world's leading humanitarian agencies. Sometimes we forget the marvellous work ADRA is doing across the world, we take it for granted that this is someone else's job, that this is some government's responsibility. The Bible says it is yours and my job.

-Maybe it's time to sponsor a child through an agency like Asian Aid. The money you give really can change a life. You might say but it's only one, however for Jesus even one is a big deal.

-What would it take to join a team that actually travels to another country and touches lives in desperate need. If you feel called in this way call the church office and you can be put in contact with organisations that need people to serve.

If you stop and think for a moment you will come up with all sorts of ways whereby you can make some small difference for a person in need. By the way, many times all it takes is simple things. For Jesus it was water, clothing and a visit.

It can start with a small act of kindness done in love. When you find yourself caring for others your heart will begin to fill until it's filled to the brim. The more you pour out the more God refills to overflowing. It's the great upside-down truth. Jesus came not to be served but to serve.

Take a look into the people's eyes around you. What can you do to encourage, care for and support God's children today? Chances are you'll pass someone today, who needs you to be Jesus to them. As Mother Theresa used to say, *"We're just pebbles being thrown into the sea and causing ripples."* Let's make ripples that expand through the agony of the world to reach each single person for Jesus.

Points to include if writing your own sermonette

1. *While the Bible tells us that because of sin we are to expect these things it also tells us that our job is not to just watch but actually do something to help.*
2. *We forget that a whole tragedy is happening on our planet at this very moment.*
3. *The Bible has more to say about looking after people than on any other theme.*
4. *When you find yourself caring for others your heart will begin to fill until it's filled to the brim.*
5. *What can you do to encourage, care for and support God's children today?*

Congregational Song *You Said or Take My Life*

Children's Leader explain the voucher give away and thank the children

Closing prayer Child

Postlude children who play instruments in your church.

End of Programme Give Away (see appendix 2)

Vouchers

Each person is given a voucher to take home and give to someone in their community that they can offer assistance and help to. This is an opportunity to get to know someone who lives in your neighbourhood better and offer help to another child of God and maybe even bring someone new into a relationship with Jesus by reflecting God's love to one of his children.

Song List

PLAY TODAY

Produced by Lyell Heise, Valmai Hill and the Institute of Worship, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Avondale College and SPD.

I Give You My heart Book 3

THE SOURCE 2

Compiled by Graham Kendrick in 2001 Published by Kevin Mayhew Ltd Buxhall, Suffolk.

You Said 1099

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH HYMNAL

Published by Review and Herald 1985

All to Jesus I Surrender	309
Give of Your Best to the Master	572
O Master Let Me Walk with Thee	574
Take My Life and Let it Be	330
Tis Love That Makes Us Happy	579

LIVE IT - CD

Composed by Janine Max in 2004, Published by maxiPraise, Cooranbong NSW.

Live It

REACH FOR JESUS - CD

Composed by Kimberly Houliston, Published by Houlico.

All That You Can Make Me
Show Me

ARNIES SHACK - CD

Composed by Kimberly Houliston, Published by Houlico.

All To You

Thank You, Words & Music By Ray Boltz, © 1988 Gaither Music (adm. By Gaither Copyright Management) ASCAP.

I'm A Helper by Karyn Henly

Grow, Grow, Grow, CD. © 2001 Playsongs administered by Child Sensitive Communication Inc., Tindale House Pub.

Background Reading For Leaders

This section provides a short study on the purpose of spiritual growth. It is provided here with a view to having you become immersed in the value and why this is such an important concept to share. As you think through the concept you might generate other ideas that allow you to present this purpose even more clearly in your context.

God Created You For Service

One of the purposes God created us for is service. We often miss this purpose by becoming wrapped up in our own needs. Service is about looking outside of our own needs to others, not for what they can give us or how they contribute to our success, but because like us they are also infinitely valuable. Like us, they are God's children.

We live in a very needs based society – we demand that our needs be met and met fast. How long are you prepared to wait in a bank line before you start crying out for your needs to be met? We take our 'my-needs' approach into relationships, families and churches and wonder why we are often left dissatisfied. When everyone is looking after their own needs there is little room for meeting another's needs.

A church community works the same. Rather than looking at the church and asking if your needs are being met, what about spending some time thinking of ways you can meet the needs of others – and then doing them. In this way you find your own life being fulfilled. It sounds backwards but it works. No doubt you've heard this before, but what would it take for you to re-orient your life around an attitude of service? Jesus tells us that it's when we experience a life of serving. Others, meeting others needs, that we will start to feel we are fulfilling God's purpose.

Growing a Servant's Heart

In Matthew, the story goes that it was the mother of James and John who came to see Jesus; in Mark, James and John get all the credit for themselves! Quite likely, James and John organised their Mum to see Jesus for them, but it really doesn't matter how it came about. What is clear is that James and John wanted the prime seats in Jesus' kingdom. No second or third place for them, it had to be first and as near to equal as could be possible! The world defines greatness in terms of power, possessions, prestige and position.

Jesus' idea of greatness would have shocked them. It is the antithesis of what the world sees as greatness. Jesus was concerned about service – not status. 2000 years later people, even Christian leaders, still jockey for position and prominence.

As a general rule a lifestyle of service runs counter to our very way of thinking. Jesus' kingdom isn't about who gets the best seats, it's about who finds opportunities to serve. Self promotion and servant hood don't mix. Real servants don't serve for the approval or applause of others. They live for an audience of one. Paul writes in Galatians 1:10, *"Obviously, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser! No, I am trying to please God. If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ's servant."* It is that attitude that Jesus wants to see cultivated in His children. To misquote JFK, 'it's not what can I get out of church, but how can I serve in and with my church for Him.' Real servants make themselves available to serve. Remind yourself at the start of each day that you are God's servant.

Cultivate A Servant Mindset

Service starts in your mind. To be a servant requires a mental shift, a change in your attitudes. Real servants pay attention to needs. They are always on the lookout for ways to help others. Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters, Galatians 6:10. When God puts a needy person in front of you, He is giving you the opportunity to grow in servant hood. Service is often thought of only as a task, but true service flows out of a servant heart and a worldview where life is seen in terms of serving God and others. Serving God and others becomes the fulfillment of life rather than an obligation or duty.

Servants Focus On The Value Of People

Great opportunities often disguise themselves in small tasks. The little things in life determine the big things. Don't be discouraged when your service is unnoticed or taken for granted. Keep on serving anyway. Remember that for Jesus a cup of water for a little child is a big deal.

Servants think more about others than about themselves. When we stop focusing on our own needs we become aware of the needs around us. Jesus 'emptied himself and took the form of a servant' not because the task was so appealing, it wasn't, but because the people He desired to serve appealed despite their, our, condition. People matter to God. The ministries He appoints us to carry out because of our gifting, our passion and our style are important because of the people we serve. We are to serve others because Jesus served others and asks us to do the same.

Life Is Meant For Ministry

We are only fully alive when we're helping others. Jesus said, *"If you insist on saving your life, you will lose it. Only those who throw away their lives for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will ever know what it means to really live."* Mark 8:35 (Living Bible). This truth is so important that it is repeated four more times in the Bible. (Matthew 10:39, 16:25; Luke 9:24, 17:33). You are going to give your life to something. What will it be - a career, sport, hobby, fame, wealth? Service is the only way to real significance. As we serve together in God's family our lives take on eternal importance. God wants to use you to make a difference in the world. He wants to work through you.

Paul uses the word 'abound' to describe the work of the Christian (2 Corinthians 9:8). To connect with God, but then keep the light to oneself is directly disobeying the commands of Jesus to reach out to the world and reflect His love.

We live in a world that tells us to be number one. Our society breeds pride through constant comparisons. Pride moves us to judge rather than to serve; to exclude instead of embrace; and to bow down before a mirror rather than before God. At the deepest level, pride is the choice to exclude both God and other people from their rightful place in our heart. Pride destroys our capacity to love. Evolution teaches us survival of the fittest and that we need to be at the top of the pile. This enhances pride.

In place of pride Jesus invites us to a life of humility. Jesus went totally against the world's wisdom when he said in Matthew 16:3 that self-sacrifice was the way to find yourself.

In choosing men and women for His service, God does not ask whether they possess learning or eloquence or worldly wealth. He asks: *"Do they walk in such humility that I can teach them my way? Can I put my words into their lips? Will they represent me?"* (Ellen White, Testimonies 7, 144).

Serving Quotes

"It seems people don't necessarily remember what they are told of God's love, but they never forget what they have experienced of God's love." Steve Sjogren

"A knowledge of the path cannot be substituted for putting one foot in front of the other." M.C Richards

"Give light, and the darkness will disappear of itself." Erasmus

"The presence of the Lord is not an idea to be mastered in the context of a book, but a heart knowledge which becomes real as we minister to others." "There was a man, though some did count him mad, the more he cast away the more he had – John Bunyan

Kindness is a language which the dumb can speak, the deaf can understand." C.N Bovee

"Jesus said 'You are the light of the world'. This is one of the most powerful ways to be an effective servant. Charles Swindoll points out that the distinctive characteristics of light are that it is silent, gives direction and attracts attention to its source. This is the goal of our service, not to serve in a showy, noisy way that attracts attention to ourselves, but in a manner which directs others to Christ." John and Agnes Sturt

"As the rays of sun penetrate to the remotest corners of the globe, so God designs that the light of the gospel shall extend to every soul upon the earth. If the church of Christ were fulfilling the purpose of our Lord, light would be shed upon all that sit in darkness." Ellen White

"Service is a choice we all face:

We either serve ourselves or others;

We serve sin or righteousness;

We serve our own desires or serve God."

John and Agnes Sturt

"The simplest act of compassion is to not look away. Real joy comes not from ease or riches or from the praise of men, but from doing something worthwhile." Sir Wilfred Grenfell