

March 28, 2004
Sid Sybenga

Shaped to Serve God 1 Peter 4:1, 7-11

For three weeks last year Elvis Presley's greatest hits CD
was the number one album in the nation,
25 years after he died!

In spite of his enormous success, Elvis was,
according to his friends, an unfulfilled and unhappy man.

He died of obesity and drug addiction at the age of 42. In an interview with his wife
Pricilla, she said:

Elvis never came to terms with who he was meant to be or
what his purpose in life was.

He thought he was here for a reason,
maybe to preach, maybe to serve,
maybe to save, maybe to care for people.

That agonizing desire was always with him and
he knew he wasn't fulfilling it.

So he'd go on stage to perform
so he wouldn't have to think about it.

What a tragic story.

Many people today, sense they are here for something –
for some higher purpose, but just haven't figured it out.

They keep very busy often performing but
remain unfulfilled and unhappy.

The Bible tells us who we are and why we are here on earth.

In Ephesians 2:10 the Holy Spirit says

“we are God workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do
good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

We are God's workmanship,

literally it says we are God's poem,

God's artistic master piece;

we are shaped by the hands of the almighty Potter,
the perfect artist. We are molded, crafted to serve.

We are created to serve. We are saved to serve,
we are gifted to serve, we are filled with the Spirit to serve.

Everything that makes us who we are today,
our experience, our skills, our personalities,
our gifts, our passions,

everything was meant to serve God and others –
to do the works God planned for us to do.

And God has lots of things planned for us to do.

It's amazing but

each one of us is shaped differently and uniquely.

You are special and God has special things planned
for you to do that no one else can.
And so the bible says in 1 Peter 4:10
“each one of us should use whatever gift you have
received to serve others.”

That is the fourth purpose of our lives:
to serve others; to God by serving others.
Last week we discovered that our third purpose is to be
and become like Jesus.
Well that is who Jesus was when he lived on earth.
A servant, a humble servant.
Any one do our memory work this week?

In Matthew 20:28 the Bible tells us that Jesus did not come
to be served, or worshiped or even loved
Jesus came to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many.

So not only does God give us a direct challenge to serve
others, also as followers of Jesus we serve as Jesus served.

So what on earth are you here for?
To serve God by serving others.
Are you serving others?
Are you using your experience, skills, gifts to help others,
is the focus of your life to build up the
people of God in our community?

The word the bible uses for serving others is the word
“ministry”. We are all ministers.
Now some people think that only pastors and
clergy and priest are ministers.
That they are the only ones who can serve in the church.
Now that may have been the perception in the middle ages
but that is not what the churches of the Reformation,
churches who read the bible, believe.
We are all called to the office of believer, of servant.
All women are ministers. All men are ministers.
All children, all old people are ministers,
called to serve, to use their gifts and abilities for others.
To serve as Jesus served.
That’s what gives meaning and value in life.

Now what does it mean for us to serve as Jesus served?
Rick Warren in his book gives a whole list of ways,
but let me mention two this morning.

Serving like Jesus means, Warren says, being available.

I think he's right on. 90% of ministry is showing up.

One of the things Jesus did in his ministry was make time for serving others. He made time. He showed up.

And for us too it is matter of making time and making choices. I'm busy person.

But if someone called with Laker tickets, you'd be amazed how quickly my schedule could be freed up.

Many people say they would love to serve, but they don't have much time.

The fact is, its enthusiasm that is lacking.

Warren says p.259

If you only serve when it's convenient for you, you're not a real servant.

Its self centeredness and materialism that often gets in the way of us becoming real servants like Jesus.

Think about it. There are 168 hours in a week.

How many hours do you spend serving others?

I don't mean at work when you get paid, unpaid serving of others?

Your check book reveals you financial priorities, but it's your date book that indicates your spiritual priorities.

To live on purpose, to serve others takes time, it takes being available for others, available for the fellowship and work of the church.

The second way of serving like Jesus is to be grateful and to delight in serving others.

Often when Jesus was doing ministry he prays and gives thanks to God for his presence and power. Psalm 100:2 says serve the Lord with gladness.

The other day there was slowdown on the freeway.

On the side of the road, escorted by police were 15 -20 men all wearing prison uniforms.

They were doing community service.

Slowly they moved along with their sticks and orange bags.

They would poke a piece of trash, look around slowly, then stick it into the plastic bag.

After another step or two, each man would poke something else, slowly pick it up, glance around, and put it in the bag.

Their posture and their movements spoke of futility and a lack of enthusiasm. They were serving/ time.

Two weeks later,
there was another slowdown on the freeway.
This time there were 15-20 youth group kids, escorted
by police, doing community service.
They were running from one spot to the next, laughing,
trying to see who could fill up his or her bag first.
With purpose and enthusiasm they were doing
their service project in the community.
They were serving/ others.

Both groups were serving.
One out of a heart of servility,
a heart without love, without gratitude, grumbling
the others with a heart of servanthood,
a heart of love and delight and thanksgiving that they
could do something for others.

One says "I have to – its my duty"
the other says "I want to – its my joy."
Servility says This is not my job.
Servant hood says I'll do whatever it takes."
Serving like Jesus is all a matter of the heart.

The other day Dave walked into the men's washroom
before the service.
Someone had splashed water all over the mirror.
While he was drying his hands,
he saw paper towels and pieces of paper on the floor.
He left rolling his eyes and figuring out who he
should tell about cleaning up the washrooms.
It was obvious someone wasn't doing their job.
A few minutes later Josh walked into the same washroom.
He too noticed the water and the papers.
He thought "this is not going to give our visitors a
very good impression."
He quickly dried off the mirror,
picked up the paper on the floor and
walked out to worship the Lord..

Servility
evaluates its involvement by asking what's in it for me.
Servant hood looks up and says
"Lord, what do you have planned for me to do today?"

Christ like ministers are grateful that God is using them
to serve others, there is delight in their work and a

love for others in their hearts.
They love deeply and offer hospitality without grumbling.

What about you, what about me? Why do you serve?
What's in your heart when you see the needs of others
or the things that need doing at church?

Like Jesus ministers serve others
by making time available and serving with gladness.

Before I finish

let me say two more things that are on my heart about
this topic of serving others.

Because God designed us to serve we should not be
surprised that this is good for us –
there are great benefits in serving.

Some of us are somewhat down about our faith and our
church membership.

We may be a little depressed spiritually, or
even depressed about our life.

When we serve others

it benefits us more than it benefits others.

When I serve others it takes the focus off me.

And that is the whole point

Life is not about me or about you, it's about God.

Its about living the purpose for which we were created.

If we want to get out of our spiritual dole drums?

if we want to feel valued and live a meaningful life,

if we want to feel good about ourself;

to get that skip back into our walk; serve others.

That's God's plan.

It's in serving others that we experience the presence
and love and the power of God.

It's in serving others that we grow spiritually.

Setting 5 hours a week aside, 2% of your time,
or 16 hours 10% of your time for serving others is
probably better for you than visiting a counselor or
taking Prozac.

You see, we were shaped, we were crafted in the potter
hands for serving others, that our purpose.

Without serving others, or serving without gladness,
we feel that our life is missing the mark.

And that bring me to my finally point.

So where can you serve? What can you do?

Many people say to themselves:
I don't have any gifts, I don't have any abilities.
I can't serve.

God tells us
each of us has a gift and we should use it to serve others.

Or some people say I don't get involved because
they haven't asked me. I don't think they need me.
Sometime I think people believe that the ministry of the
church belongs to the pastor.
Your involvement does not depend on me asking you.
Ministers, Christ like servants take initiative.
They don't wait to be asked.

It is not the pastor's job to organize the cleaning of the
refrigerator, or to get the lawn cut or the bushes
trimmed. It is not the pastor's job to write the pay
checks and bake the bread for communion.

Everyone is given a gift,
everyone is given abilities for the good of the body and
to serve others.
So please don't wait for the pastor to get you serving.

So what needs to be done, how can you serve others?
Begin by asking God what he's planned for you to do.
Focus on what Jesus did for you.
Make time available and show up.

Then take a look at all the people we pay in church.
It seems we can only get the work done if we pay.
All those jobs for which we pay
can be done by Christ like servants and ministers.
You know how long it takes to get the bulletin ready?
2-3 ours a week. The calendar 2 hours a month.
Being a youth leader 3-4 hour a week.
Vacuuming a room 20 mins.
Cleaning carpets 2 hours a week.
We need people on Monday
to straighten out all the rooms after a busy Sunday.
People to get the trash bin ready for our Tuesday pick up
(Wayne has been doing that for the last 3 month).

What can you do? How about visiting a shut in,
doing the book keeping for the church,
setting up for the pot luck lunch,
cleaning up after lunch, serving coffee after church.
Helping with the sound system. Cleaning the eave troughs,

putting up the sign, being a greeter.
Calling a first time visitor, teaching a class.
Mentoring a new Christian. Welcoming a new family.
Sending someone a note of encouragement,
adopting a family in the church to build a special
relationship with, helping the pastors,
taking someone out for a meal, cleaning a cupboard,
stocking the kitchen, did I say cleaning the kitchen?
keeping our web site, helping in the office,
filing, stocking and buy our paper.
Running errands, cleaning walls and windows,
taking out a bunch of youth to magic mountain or the
beach, Making snacks for our ESL student or our
youth groups, teaching ESL helping with ESL,
cleaning a room,
maybe we could have an adopt a room program here,
count money with the deacons,
give some a ride to church,
keep the minutes for council,
be the treasurer. Be a small group leader.
host a small group in your home.
Hand out tracks at the mall or the fair,
visit one of our ethnic congregation and ask them how
you could help, pray with the pastors,
clean the sound room or the kitchen,
make a brochures, do a bulletin board,
dust the sanctuary,
clean the rug in one of the rooms,
be an elder or deacon,
organize an evangelism event,
volunteer to do the nursery.

1 Peter 4;1,2,7-11.

God heaven, holy spirit help to do what it take to serve others. Mold me and make me do the good works you planned for us to do in Jesus name. Father, I realize you shaped me to serve you by serving others. Forgive me for the time I've put a do not disturb sign on my heart. Help me to make time for what matters most. You've been so good to me. I want to give something back. I want to serve you freely, gladly, faithfully. Amen.