

Me and others in my Life

Am I selfish?

Do I think of others?

Do I think of God and others in EVERYTHING I do?

What do I do for others?

Why do I do it?

What is Service?

Open for discussion. What does it mean to serve?

As Christians, we always seek to do good, and the way to achieve this is through the service.

Christ gave us the ultimate example of service for he humbled himself and sacrificed himself for us. Likewise, we will talk about service is a manifestation of sacrificial love to others. God has entrusted us with this gift, how will we be good stewards of it.

There are numerous examples of saints that spent their whole life in service to others and to God.

Types of Service

Service can happen on both a social and a spiritual level.

Social: On the social level, we usually talk about Acts of Charity, Visitation, Helping others, the poor, the needy, the elderly. These are social services. This is how we serve the society around us. We see how much secular organizations, such as the Red Cross, or the Peace Corps serve others. How much more are we called to serve as Christians.

Spiritual: But there is also a spiritual service, that all of us are called to. For instance, we are called to save one another. If we see someone falling into sin, it is our duty as Christians to bring this person back. So we are called for this spiritual service. We are called to pray and intercede for those in need.

Avoiding the Misconceptions of Service

Unfortunately, many feel that they are inadequate to serve, because they feel that service only comes in the field of education. That is, this person feels that, unless I am a youth leader, or I am Sunday school teacher, then I am not a servant.

Remove this thought from your head and heart. Teaching is but one aspect of service. It is unfortunate that we sometimes refer to Sunday school teachers as only servants. Yes, they are servants, but they are teachers. All are servants. We may better say Sunday school servants, instead.

We have to understand that service is a spiritual means, as we mentioned before. What does that mean? In other words, how does service benefit us spiritually?

Service increases the spiritual life, and at the same time, the spiritual life will increase the service. How does this work? Let's start with how our service can increase the spiritual life. Let us say that we are serving some poor or troubled families. We will quickly realize that we cannot help them by our own power. In other words, we will realize our human weakness, quickly turn to God, and pray for them and pray for your service. So, we see how serving others makes us realize our limitations and really puts us in a position to turn to no one except God for help.

Now, we come to the second point, that the spiritual life will increase the service. Once God has been invited to work in you and through you, your spiritual life will increase, and therefore the measure, the result, and the quality of your service will no doubt increase as well. We will see this in the next section.

I. The "Do's" and the "Don'ts" of Service

A. Service should be:

- 1. We have to first realize that we are all called to serve because service is the labor of love.** Someone asked, "Is it possible to be a Christian without giving or serving?" In response, someone said, "Is God Love?" The reply was "Yes." How about this, "If a husband loves his wife, won't he give to her?" "Surely, he will." Therefore, we are called to be sons of God in his Love, so if we love everyone, then we will give, right?

So it is impossible to be Christian without giving or serving.

2. **Accompany Service with Prayer.** This is part of our unseen service. There were many people who followed the apostles and Christ, Himself, who are not really mentioned, but took part in the unseen service. For instance, Saint Mark's mother offered her home to Christ for the Last Supper, and the Apostles for the First Church. This is part of the unseen service, and we see that it may be of greater benefit than the seen service. For example, the service of the monks is unseen, but we know that they are praying for all of us.
3. **Persevere in the Service.** Many people lost the service, because they became lukewarm and lost their zeal for the service. This is because they didn't understand what the true service was. I have seen many youth and many adults who have been excited about certain projects and come willing to serve, and after a few months time, they lose their zeal. This is because the SPIRIT of service was not firmly rooted. We may all get lazy from time to time in our service, but the important thing is arise from our laziness and return quickly.

B. The Don'ts of Service

1. **Don't let the service turn into a purely administrative process.** This may be especially hard for those who constantly organize activities, and they start to lose the personal touch with those whom they serve. It is important to maintain this personal touch with those whom we serve and not turn service into a job.
2. **Keep away from spiritual errors.** As we said before, a good spiritual life will definitely improve the quality of our service.
3. **Don't lose your gentleness, humility, and beware of the Ego.** It is easy for those who serve, to be recognized for their service and to be praised. Avoid the love of praise, and give all glory to God for your service. This is a giant obstacle to overcome in the service. At the same time, do not lose your gentleness and humility towards those you serve. It is very easy to become frustrated in the service. Just keep in mind the spirituality of the service. It is almost better not to serve, than to serve in a manner that will cause us to sin. Don't be so easy to abandon the service all together, but take time to sit back, and reflect, improve your spirituality, which will likewise improve the service.
4. **In order to benefit more from your service, pay closer attention to the positives than the negatives.** There is a proverb that says, "Instead of cursing the darkness, light a candle." Work on being an example, rather than constantly complaining in your service. Offer the spiritual touch to those you serve rather than criticize. Being overly critical will be of no benefit to everyone, because you will be put in a position to judge, and you will lose the love of the other person.

Discussion Questions. What are your thoughts?

1. How can you get involved in the service? Recognize your talents, plain and simple. On a youth retreat, recently, I saw some people who benefited so much spiritually, that I could see this manifest itself in the service. They were doing things, which they might not consider service, such as helping us clean or taking care of other things, but I consider it service, because I saw them doing things out of love and a desire to do those things.

2. Is it wrong to be forced into the service? Sometimes, we need to be pushed. As long as we have even the smallest desire to serve, no matter how small, when we start serving, we will see this desire grow. We see the example of Christ going to those whom he healed and often asking them, "Do you want to be healed?" We have the free will to choose.
3. At church, it is obvious that there are many youth and others in general, who do not come to church, or when they do come to church, are not benefiting or are not enjoying it. How can we serve them better? Offering the personal touch, being patient, praying for them.

'Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

"Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'" (Matt 25:34-46)