

Serve to Lead

Simple Life #4 – Pastor Gary Combs – 1/28/24 – Matthew 20:25-28

INTRO: Good morning church! We're concluding our series today entitled: "SIMPLE LIFE: How Simple Commitments Create Great Life Change." But how can we simplify our lives when everything today is so complex and chaotic?

One of the best ways to simplify life is to know your purpose in life. Knowing your purpose gives clarity when deciding when to say "yes" and when to say "no." You're able to streamline your life around that purpose.

Need: Yet, we live in a day when many of us are drifting along without a guiding purpose in life. Or we've bought into the culture's idea that happiness and fulfillment come from self gratification, of owning material things and having exciting experiences. Yet we still come up feeling empty and unfulfilled. Or we think that being successful, or being the greatest at something will fulfill us. But as many who have achieved worldly success have said, "It's lonely at the top." Because they left behind family or stepped on or over friends while climbing the so-called ladder of success. So how do find our purpose? How do we find ourselves?

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." If you are trying to discover yourself and find a sense of fulfillment and purpose, there is no better way than in serving others.

"7 Scientific Benefits of Helping Others" — <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/71964/7-scientific-benefits-helping-others>

1. **Helping others can help you live longer.** Research has shown that serving others improves health and longevity.
2. **Helping others is contagious.** One study found that people are more likely to perform feats of generosity after observing another do the same.
3. **Helping others makes us happy.** One team of sociologists tracked 2000 people over a five-year period and found that Americans who described themselves as "very happy" volunteered at least 5.8 hours per month.
4. **Helping others may help with chronic pain.** According to one study, people who suffered from chronic pain tried working as peer volunteers. As a result, they experienced a reduction in their own symptoms.
5. **Helping others lowers blood pressure.** One piece of research showed that older individuals who volunteered for at least 200 hours a year decreased their risk of hypertension by a whopping 40 percent.
6. **Helping others promotes positive behaviors in teens.** According to sociologists, teenagers who volunteer have better grades and self-image.
7. **Helping others gives us a sense of purpose and satisfaction.** Studies show that volunteering enhances an individual's overall sense of purpose and identity—particularly if they no longer hold a life-defining role like "worker" or "parent."

Trans: So, the science indicates that serving others benefits our health, our happiness, and our sense of purpose and satisfaction in life. But what if there's an even greater benefit? A greater outcome? Jesus says there is. Jesus says that the way to greatness, the way to leadership, is serving others. Jesus calls us to be servant leaders.

BODY: In the book of Matthew, the mother of James and John asked Jesus to give her sons seats of authority in His kingdom. Jesus answered that leadership in His kingdom meant first becoming a servant. We can follow Christ's call to servant leadership. How can we follow Christ's call to servant leadership? The text gives **three ways** we can follow Christ's call to servant leadership.

Today's text: Matthew 20:25-28 (ESV) ²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

As we look at the three ways of how to be a servant leader, I want to use leadership expert, John Maxwell's well-known definition for a leader as a kind of template:

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way." — John Maxwell

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HOW TO BE A SERVANT LEADER

1. Know the way of the Son.

EXP: (28) “Son of Man” - a Messianic title. Jesus offers Himself as the example and the way to be a servant leader. (25-26) Jesus began by contrasting worldly leadership with servant leadership.

“Rulers” (25) (ἄρχων, *archōn*) - a ruler, commander, chief, leader

“Lord it over” (25) (κατακυριεύω, *katakurieuō*) - exercise dominion over, to hold in subjection, to be master.

“Great ones” (25) (μεγάλοι, *megaloi*) - predicated of rank, those in positions of authority and power.

“Exercise authority over” (25) (κατεξουσιάζω, *katexousiazō*) - to exercise authority, wield power

“Great” (26) (*megas*) - This is greatness in God’s kingdom, which is counter to the world’s definition.

“Servant” (26) (διάκονος, *diakonos*) - a servant, attendant, minister. One who serves another.

ARG: Maxwell says that a leader is one who **knows the way**. First, the “way” is a Person— **Jesus**.

John 14:6 (ESV) Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Knowing the way means having a clear vision and purpose: The Great Commission and the...

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV) ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

...The Great Commandment

Mark 12:30-31 (ESV) ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

ILL: Our church purpose statement:

Eastgate Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ who have a growing . . .

Heart for God expressed in passionate worship and generous giving,

Heart for Each Other expressed in authentic fellowship and devoted discipleship, and

Heart for Our World expressed in intentional evangelism and sacrificial service.

APP: Learning the way of the Son, so that you know Him and follow His purpose for your life to make disciples. This is about knowing the “why” for your service. “I greet guests at the door to help others feel welcome in the house of Jesus. I give out bulletins in front of this sign...”



2. Go the way of the servant.

EXP: (26-27) Do you want to be great? Serve. Do you want to be first? Be last, be a slave. In God’s kingdom, we don’t climb the ladder of success, we go down. We descend to greatness.

“First” (27) (πρῶτος, *prōtos*) - first in rank, influence, honor, chief, principal

“Slave” (27) (δοῦλος, *doulos*) - a slave, devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests.

ARG: The apostles adopted this title of “slave” (*doulos*) for themselves:

Romans 1:1 (NLT) This letter is from Paul, a **slave** of Christ Jesus ...

2 Peter 1:1 (NLT) This letter is from Simon Peter, a **slave** and apostle of Jesus Christ ...

James 1:1 (NLT) This letter is from James, a **slave** of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ ...

Jude 1:1 (NLT) This letter is from Jude, a **slave** of Jesus Christ and a brother of James ...

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A good leader serves others and is an example of what excellent service looks like.

Luke 22:26 (ESV) But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.

ILL: Pastor Jonathan recently put a framed prayer above our nursery changing tables titled: “A Liturgy for Changing Diapers.” This informs our “why” and our “how.”



APP: Going the way means going beyond just understanding your purpose, you’re actually living it out and doing it with excellence and joy! It means doing the little things. It means knowing both the “why” and the “how” of my service: “I serve in the nursery for Jesus and for babies so they are safe and clean and for their parents so that they can focus on growing in following Jesus...”

3. Show the way of the Savior

EXP: (28) Jesus came to serve and “give his life as a ransom.” He gave Himself away. We are to pour our lives into others, showing them the way to come to Jesus and follow Him.

“Life” (28) (ψυχή, *psuchē*) - the breath of life, a living being, a living soul.

“Ransom” (28) (λύτρον, *lutron*) - the price for redeeming, ransom, paid for slaves. He bought us out of slavery to sin that we might be free to serve Him.

ARG: As followers of Jesus we are to show others the way of following Him. Paul showed Timothy...

2 Timothy 2:2 (NIV) And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

ILL: Jesus held the master class on showing the way. He spent 3 years with His disciples showing them. Then He gave us the Spirit to empower us to serve. You might say He followed the 5 Steps of Leadership Development: 1) I do. You watch. We talk. 2) I do. You help. We talk. 3) You do. I help. We talk. 4) You do. I watch. We talk. 5) You do. Someone else watches...



APP: Servant leadership begins with knowing the way and going the way, but it isn’t complete until we show the way, leading others to follow and serve Jesus with us. Who are you showing the way?

VISION: DEVELOP MORE SERVANT LEADERS

One Year Goal: We will have intentionally developed more leaders who know the way, go the way, and show the way, so that more people in our church are developing as servant leaders and their leadership is benefiting the church so that we see steady growth internally (*becoming more like Jesus in character and conduct*) and externally (*mobilizing our members to share the gospel and collaborating to saturate our city with the gospel*).

Why? Wilson and Eastern NC is growing. Our church is growing. The thing that will slow down our growth is a lack of leaders. We need more servant leaders in nearly every area of our church!

We praying for more CG Shepherds. We currently have 20 (16 in Wilson; 4 in RM). If every CG would begin to develop an apprentice leader, teaching them to know the way, go the way, and show the way. I believe we could have 30 CGs this time next year. We need that many to take care of the people that are coming.

We’re praying for missional leaders to help lead our collaborative efforts with other churches in our city.

We’re praying for a third campus pastor, so that we can plant more churches in Eastern NC.

CONCLUSION: We want to make disciples of Jesus, servant leaders, who have a heart for God, heart for each other and a heart for our world. Servant leaders of Jesus that 1) Know the way of the Son, 2) Go the way of the servant, and 3) Show the way of the Savior, who gave His life for us. Let’s pray.