

*Introduction: Pg. 929*

After my first year of graduate studies, I had the opportunity to travel with one of my professors and about 10 other classmates to Ecuador. Our team served in Guayaquil, the largest city in Ecuador, located on the Pacific Ocean. While there, we worked alongside missionaries, local church leaders, and a leader of an NGO serving the lame, crippled, diseased, deaf and blind. One night, four of us had the opportunity to go worship in a house church in one of the poorer areas of an already poor city. I remember sitting against the cinder block walls in the plastic chairs they provided and being impressed by the sincerity of their love for God, even though my Spanish was not sharp and I could understand little of what was said.

After our time ended, we said goodbye to our hosts and thanked them for welcoming us into their home. Just before we were going to step into our 15 passenger van, two of the brothers asked us to wait right there. They ran down the street and came back a couple of minutes later with these large packages that looked like picture frames. As it turns out, their livelihood consists of taking prints from local artists and framing them, in order to sell them on the streets. As you might imagine, we were humbled by their gesture. BUT we didn't realize the magnitude of their gift. When we got into the van our professor said, "Guys, you don't realize what just happened. They just extended what probably amounts to about a month's worth of earnings."

I'll never forget their generosity.

Here we were, these seemingly "rich" American Christians, hanging with our seemingly "poor" Ecuadoran brothers in Christ, and their act of service toward us taught us a priceless lesson in generosity. That night, we discovered the richest people on the sidewalk were not the ones with Nikes on their feet and dollar bills in their wallets. Those who had little were actually loaded in the sight of God.

*FCF:* On my better days, when I am tempted toward withholding my time and treasure from others, I think about moments when I have experienced the power of being served generously by others.

- The Book of Acts is really a book about service. The earliest followers of Christ were on a mission to *serve* the message of Christ to all people.

**"One: Serve Together"**  
**Acts 4:32-28:31**

Last week, we looked at what it means to Live life together with a WE OVER ME mindset. This morning our focus is . . .

**The Point: Serve together with a WE OVER ME mindset.**

- It didn't take long for those sharing the good news about Jesus' death and resurrection in Jerusalem to be persecuted and quickly thrust out of the city.
- **Acts 8:1-4** tells us: "[T]here arose on that day [speaking of the day Stephen became the first martyr of the church] a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. . . . Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word."
- One of those who gave his greatest energy to persecuting Christians was a young man named Saul. He gave approval to the death of Stephen and made it his business to imprison Christians with, as he says himself, "raging fury." (Acts 26:11)
- That was until Jesus made it a point to turn his life upside down in Acts 9 when Jesus told him that he was "**appoint[ed] as a servant and witness to . . . the Gentiles . . . so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.**" (Acts 26:16-18)

- From that moment, the Book of Acts is dominated by the work of God through Paul and his companions as they took the gospel across Asia into Europe starting new churches and encouraging them to live wholeheartedly for God. That's the Book of Acts.
- They were a **unified community on a unified mission. {PIC}**

\*If you were curious how I was going to teach you 24 chapters in 40 minutes, there's your answer. It was actually three minutes :) So, now let's zoom in to Acts 20.

One of the churches Paul started was in the city of Ephesus.

- Paul spent 3 years there, preaching Christ, seeing people burn their idolatrous books of magic to worship the one, true God, and unintentionally starting riots, because when you start messing up the socioeconomic dynamics in the city, people don't like that a very much.
- I love Acts 20, because when Paul speaks to the pastor leaders of the church in Ephesus, he gives us an awesome glimpse into the heart of service that should be true of every Christian.

What do we learn about serving from Paul in Acts 20? *{Acts 20:17-38.}*

The first thing I want you to see is this:

### **I. Serving begins by being Served.**

- If you have not been served, you probably will not know how to serve.
- One of the reasons Paul knew how to serve is because he had been served by the Church (i.e. other Christians: Ananias, Barnabus, those at Antioch, Philippi and the list goes on).
- But the ultimate reason Paul knew how to serve is because he had been served by Jesus!

Being served by Christ holds the power to transform our hearts. . .

- App: Do you ever get stuck in a rut of selfishness?
- I can get so focused on my time and my tasks that I'm less inclined to serve people as I serve people. :) You catch that?

But the gospel ignites our service.

- When we really consider the selfless love of Christ as displayed in his death on the cross, it is really impossible to look around and say, "Hey, serve *me*."
- No! We start rushing to serve. We see an opportunity . . . I got that! A need arises. . . can I do that? Good. I can't do that? Man... I got next.
- That's what a cruciform life looks like. The love of Christ moves us to grateful emulation. "**To live is Christ.**" (Phil 1:21)
- In light of how he has served me, how could I not gladly serve others?

T: Being served holds the power to transform the heart, and then as our hearts are changed, we gladly serve others. So, the second thing I want you to see is this:

### **II. Serving reveals a transformed Heart.**

Before we met Christ, our natural disposition is to want others to serve us. But now because of Jesus . . .

#### **We want to Serve with Others.**

- Serving brings us into contact with others. Jesus modeled this with his disciples, orchestrating his business as a team.
- Paul did not go at it alone, but gladly pulled people like Barnabas, John Mark, Silas, Timothy, and Luke into serving with him.

- He also set up teams of leaders (known as elders or pastors) to serve the churches he helped start.
- Ex. - When we began dreaming about starting a new church in Boston, we started praying for a team. AND now, you're part of the TEAM.
- You see, some churches basically serve with one main pastor that calls all the key shots. Why don't we? Well... we have a plurality of pastor leaders (JC, JR currently) because . . .
  - 1) That's not what we see in the New Testament.
  - 2) There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors.
  - 3) There is mutual encouragement for the good and tough times.
  - 4) There is effectiveness in ministry. Two are better than one. Three are better than two.
  - 5) Related to that. . . A plurality of pastor leaders have a multitude of gifts. Jon likes to playfully say, "We have a plurality of elders to round out all of Tanner's weaknesses." That's pretty much true! Haha...
- And let me say: It's fun to serve as a team. We *actually* enjoy serving together. We laugh together, grab meals, share stories. At times, make fun of one another, because we are friends. We are family. We are a TEAM. We have each other's backs.
- And we want this approach to trickle down to every level of our church.

### **We want to Love Others as we Serve.**

- **Galatians 5:13** says, "**through love serve one another.**"
- Some have called this "The Sacrifice of a Shared Life." When Jesus wrecks our hearts, he creates strange desires within us to give ourselves away for the sake of others.
- Love moves us to work with diligence and intensity. Look back at 18-21 - "You know how I lived . . ."
- Place -public and house; People- Jews & Greeks; Verse 31 tells us his time commitment: "did not cease night or day to admonish everyone"
- Love breaks a sweat. Why? Because we are striving to see the miracle of Christ being formed in people everyday.
- It has been a unique season at RHC this summer, in that, we have 10 babies born this summer. 10! Ask any of those 10 mothers if delivering their baby was a walk in the park. Hit the labor & delivery floor in a hospital and you hit intensity, anguish, sweat, tears, & joy, and celebration and wonder and amazement!
- And Paul says in **Gal 3:19: "I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!"** Not an easy job.
- And this doesn't include Paul's daily grind of tentmaking. Verses 33-34: "These hands . . ." There were times Paul received support from churches to help meet needs, but there were also times, like in Ephesus, like in Corinth, where he worked with his hands.
- Paul had a whatever it takes mentality.

*T:* But not only do we give our all physically . . .

- Love holds the power to deeply move our emotions.
  - Paul's heart was totally in this. He made himself vulnerable.
  - Look at verse 19.
  - Check verse 31.
  - Now, verse 37.
  - What is the common dominator? TEARS.
- Paul carried deep compassion. His life was bound up with their spiritual health. Their hearts were knit together.
- And let's not forget that Paul spent 3 years there. On the one hand, we extend love immediately. On the other hand, it builds over time.

- So let me encourage you to Stick around. Invest. Be in it for the long haul. It is so counter-cultural and it is so worth it!

T: But we do not simply want to serve with other and love others . . .

- **We want to Serve and Love Others with Integrity and Passion.**
- Let's serve with authenticity and sincerity. Paul starts by saying: "You know me!"
- Paul was faithful. He walked worthy of Christ. There was no physical or spiritual adultery in Paul's life. [Ashley Madison scandal...]
- We can't serve others effectively if we fail to keep a diligent watch over our own souls. *Verse. 28: "Pay attention to yourselves and the flock..."*
- Paul's integrity was the result of his devotion to Christ. So was his passion. Look at *verse 24*.
  - Paul could stare suffering in the face because physical comfort took the backseat to fulfilling God's assignment!
  - He placed a higher value on other's souls than he did his own. "My life is not precious. . . I'm willing to sacrifice, and I'm going to run hard!"
- I absolutely love Paul's passion and zeal.
  - I think our college students, who are rolling back into Boston, can identify with this kind of passion and zeal. I'm praying this for you! and YET. . .
  - Paul was closer to the end of his life than the beginning . . .
  - There's a story of an older man who walked with Jesus and served his church deep into his eighties. People started coming to him: "Hey, you've served, you've gone hard. Don't you think it's time to just sleep in. Let the young people do it."
  - His response: "Shall I not run with all my might, now that I see the finishing line in view?"
  - Give me that spirit when I'm eighty-something.
- When Acts 20:24 is our heart, serving others becomes the most natural move to make.

T: Because we understand serving reveals a transformed heart, and because Jesus has, is and will continue to transform us, I want to invite you to . . .

## **IIb. SERVE WITH A TEAM!**

That's point 2b. We want to have a serving culture at RHC. One of our dreams is that every person who calls RHC home will Connect with a Group and Serve with a Team. Most of our Teams do their thing on Sundays

*Why Sunday?*

- Sundays are where we encounter and extol the greatness of God. Sundays are the collision point where our values are most clearly expressed: gospel transformation, encouragement in community, and motivation for mission.
- We expect what happens on Sunday to influence the other 167 hours of our upcoming week, and that's why we invite others to join us to experience God!

*And because worship is that important, we want to extend the grace of hospitality to every person God sends our way and serve them really, really well.*

- Whether someone is here for the first time or the 100<sup>th</sup> time, we believe **every Sunday presents an opportunity to alter someone's eternity, not to mention their tomorrow!**
- Our staff and our Sunday TEAMS work hard to provide a welcoming atmosphere where people can encounter God.

**So what about you? Are you ready to Serve with a Team?**

- Our move to Chevalier Theatre next week presents a great opportunity to begin serving on one of our **Sunday TEAMS**. We have great, new positions created to maximize this new experience.

- Consider how God has SHAPED you. How has he gifted you? What abilities and passions do you have? What experiences can you bring to the table to help make Sundays great? Maybe you want to hop on our
- **Transformation Station (KIDS) TEAM** - Our goal on every team is for people to serve one Sunday a month. To get there, with our Chevalier restructure and our volunteer moms on maternity leave, we need 25 new people on this TEAM. We got this! If you have a kid who has benefitted from the awesome experience that is TS, would you consider serving. You can teach OR you can serve as a classroom assistant. What about . . .
- **First Impressions.** We need some dynamic people to welcome our guests and help them get connected in Guest Services. We need ushers, greeters, additions on our parking team, and some people to help us execute NEXT, which will soon replace our newcomers reception about once a month after the service.
- **Praise Team.** Do you have percussion skills? Can you play the bass or guitar? Has God gifted you with a beautiful voice? Connect with Micah.
- **Audio/Visual.** Needs some help with setup. Speaking of. . . We're creating a new
- **Venue.** Team to help with Setup and Tear Down.
- No matter what your gifts, interests, or even availability, we have a spot for you on a TEAM. Don't hesitate!

*T:* Because here's the good news. When you serve, look what happens in *verse 35* . . .

### III. Serving results in great Reward.

Serve with a desire for Reward. It's no crime to be motivated by reward. In fact, I would say it's impossible to seek after God and not be motivated by reward because he is the greatest reward, and he delights to pour out his blessing on us.

- Is it a blessing to receive? YES!
- But Jesus says it is MORE of a blessing to give.
- If you want to make God smile, give. God recognizes a giving spirit, because he is infinitely more willing to give than we are to receive.
- To be a successful servants, we need a "more mentality." We think: "more, more, more, more." But *not* more for ourselves, more for others.
- Let *me* hook *you* up. More. Let *me* serve *you*. More. Let *me* take care of *your* kids. WE OVER ME = More. Let *me* show *you* where the restroom is. Let *me* strum that guitar for *you*. Let *me* open up that Word for *you*. Let *me* get that resource table all set up. More. Let *me* fix those parking signs. More. More. More. Let *me* hang those tarps out there on the window. Oh wait, no more tarps when we move upstairs, hahaha. That's more too. More
- But you see the irony, right? The more we give, the more we receive.
- That irony will change your life.

*Conclusion:*

We have a great God and a great city to serve.

Will you sign up to Serve with a Team, today?

Let's make it happen all for the glory of God *and* their joy *and* our joy!

Pray with me.