



Serving God 1 BEARING KINGDOM FRUIT



→ *What thoughts / emotions does the word 'serve' stir? If you know your 'love language,' is it works of service, in which case your response may be different?*

PREMISE: We serve for one of three main reasons

- Because we HAVE to, like a SLAVE.
 - Because we NEED to, like an EMPLOYEE wanting a PAY CHEQUE.
 - Because we WANT to, out of LOVING RELATIONSHIP.
- *Which one should it be for us as Christians? Which one is it for you, actually?*

POINT: Service OVERFLOWS from RELATIONSHIP

- * Not because we HAVE to
 - * Not out of a sense of DEBT
 - * Not the necessity of PLEASING the UNPLEASABLE
- If that's what's going on in our heads, we'll never be SATISFIED.
- *Why will we never be satisfied unless we serve out of relationship (unless it's want to, rather than have to or need to)? What are the dangers of serving out of have/need to?*
- *To what extent does serving God flow naturally out of walking with God and meeting with God?*
- The words we all want to hear, "WELL DONE, GOOD + FAITHFUL SERVANT!" (Mt 25:21)

READ JOHN 15:1-8

Throughout the NT, especially the gospels, there is the strong implication that we were created for PRODUCTIVITY.

- *To what extent were we wired for activity, creativity, to do or make something? Is it hunter / gatherer? Are we prone to be 'human doings' rather than 'human beings'?*
- *To what extent do we measure ourselves by productivity (success/achievements)? Is that good or bad? Is it inevitable? Is God interested in our productivity?*
- * A TREE'S purpose is to produce FRUIT.
 - * A GOOD tree produces GOOD fruit.
 - * If an APPLE tree produces APPLES, what about a CHRISTIAN?
- *What fruit should a Christian produce? How? What fruit should a Christian NOT produce? How?*

1. FRUIT-BEARING is EXPECTED

- ⁸*When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. = Test of the genuine article*
- * Eph 2:10 → *For we are God's WORKMANSHIP created in Christ Jesus to DO GOOD WORKS, which God PREPARED in advance for us to do. (See also Col 1:9-11)*
 - * In AGRICULTURE, bearing fruit is a multi-faceted NATURAL process. ... Depends on health of tree, depth of roots, quality of soil, weather conditions at key times of year, harvesting at just right time, etc.
 - * In the KINGDOM, bearing fruit is a multi-faceted SUPERNATURAL process.

- *What factors contribute to the natural and supernatural fruit-bearing processes? What is the ultimate purpose of fruit-bearing?*
- *What does Colossians 1:9-13 call us to and what resources does the Lord provide to get us there?*

2. PRUNING is REQUIRED

- ¹*I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.*
- * The Vine-Keeper PRUNES us so we BEAR MORE FRUIT.
- ³*You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you.*
- * Lord is repeatedly taking us back to the WORD for PRUNING.
 - * In part at least, God ALLOWS what He ALLOWS because it FORCES US BACK to the WORD that TRANSFORMS.
 - * We TRUST that God is GOOD, that He KNOWS EXACTLY what He is doing, and YIELD to the process.
- *Why does God prune us? How does God prune us? What methods does He use and why? Why is God's Word so important in pruning?*
- *Is God pruning you right now? What situations / people is He using? How are you responding to it? Can you tell any stories of how the Lord has pruned you in the past?*

3. CONNECTION is KEY

- * Your FRUITFULNESS will be in direct proportion to your CONNECTIVITY to the Vine.
- ⁴*Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me. ⁵⁻⁸I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing.*
- * So crucial we understand that SEVERED from TRUNK of the TREE, the BRANCH DIES.
 - * Unless we're PROPERLY ENGRAFTED into the VINE, we won't produce GRAPES.
 - * Amazing thing is that although we are destined to SERVE, we do so, not as SERVANTS, but as SONS (John 15:15, Luke 15:22).
 - * In God's Kingdom, SONS SERVE.
- *How does the Master Vine-Dresser (Father) skilfully engraft us into the Vine (Jesus)?*
- *What happens when we get disconnected? What traps are there out there and what are the consequences of those traps?*
- *What does it mean to 'abide in the vine'?*
- *What is 'graced serving'? What is the 'new way' mentioned in Romans 7:6? What is the difference between serving as a servant or as a son? Which are you? What can we learn from the story of the Prodigal Son?*

RESPONSE

- Are we bearing fruit? Who or what are we serving?
- Do we invite or resist pruning? Maybe God involved in necessary surgery right now + you should embrace it?
- How strong is your connection? Are you engrafted into Vine or going it alone?