



ENTER God's presence

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

– Joshua 24:15b

Lord God, we know that you promise to bless those who serve and worship you. So we come before you now confident that you will bless us as we gather around your word. Use this time to direct our hearts to serve you more devotedly. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **Share your highs and lows with each other?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **Share a time when you experienced either exceptional or atrocious customer service.**

"Do you want fries with that?" For most of us that was our introduction to the marketing ploy "upsizing." A subtle yet convincing insinuation that you really wanted more...bigger is better...more is more satisfying. That upsizing mindset has permeated much of our thinking. Older Australians are encouraged to upsize their homes to protect their pension. Sellers experiment with upsizing their packaging to appeal to a wider customer base. As a society we are constantly told to upsize ourselves. To believe in ourselves, to put our best foot forward. Look at your resume! The classic upsize...promote ourselves and upsize our achievements. But Jesus wasn't concerned about upsizing or even downsizing because he proclaimed that for God's saving purpose in this world, you are just the right size. Today we explore what Faith formed service really looks like.

Week beginning:
Sunday 9th August 2020

Worship series:

Faith Formed



VERSE for the week

"... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 20:28



REMEMBER this week

You are the right size to serve. In all things, his love will fill you, his Spirit will equip you, his strength will enable you, and his presence will guide you to leave the imprint of his self-giving love in every act and every interaction.



LISTEN attentively

Read Matthew 20:20-28

- 4. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
- 5. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
- 6. What is your personal reaction to James and John (the sons of Zebedee) and their mother trying to 'upsized' their position in the Kingdom of God?**

This week our focus is on faith formed service. One of the biggest shifts in the idea of service has been the introduction of 'self-service'. In 1917, in the US, Clarence Saunders was recognised as the first person to operate a self-service grocery store. Up until that point, the process usually involved taking your grocery list to the store, handing it to the attendant and waiting while they packaged up all the things on your list. Since then, we have seen an explosion of self serve options. We can now go to the supermarket and check out our own groceries ourselves and I suspect many of our younger people don't even remember when an attendant would pump your fuel at the petrol station for you. It used to be that service was about doing something for other people but increasingly, the idea of self service and what others can, or should do for me seems to be taking its place. This kind of thinking is evident in the favour that James and John, together with their mother, ask of Jesus. It is a request made out of self interest and self service. A request to upsize what they had already received and one which they felt that they had earned, given the sacrifices they probably had to make to become followers of Jesus.

One of our biggest problems, which goes right back to Adam and Eve is the desire that we have to be more than we were made to be. We want to upsize ourselves and make ourselves better or more important than we are. Eve first ate the forbidden fruit after being convinced it would make her like God (Genesis 3:5). If Adam and Eve had been content to be God's creatures and not try to be like him, then human history may have turned out vastly differently. The key to faith formed service is to understand accurately where we fit as children of God, redeemed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.



GROW deeper

Take a look at Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Peter 4:7-11

While self-serve grocery stores may have only been with us for about 100 years, the problem of boasting and thinking more of ourselves than we should has been an issue for humanity from the very beginning. In Romans 12, the apostle Paul encourages us to, "not think more highly of yourselves that you ought, but think of yourself with sober judgement." Unfortunately both Scripture (1 Corinthians is a good example) and our own experiences, testify to the fact that even within the church, whether it be the global people of God or our own local expressions of that global body, that we have a tendency to do this. We upsize some people and often ourselves, taking note of the way people contribute to the life of the church or their local community and applauding their efforts, while at the same time we downsize others by failing to recognise the contributions they make or writing them off as people who have nothing to contribute.

- 7. Most of us are guilty of either upsizing or downsizing ourselves and our gifts, how do you think of yourself when it comes to serving in or through the church?**
- 8. Both of these passages make it clear that God gives gifts to all his people to be used to serve others. No one is left out, everyone has a part to play. Sometimes these gifts can be hard to identify for ourselves. Spend some time in your groups sharing what gifts you can see present in each other.**

So, how do we make sure we have an accurate and sober opinion of ourselves and what we have to offer? Look at Mathew 20:28. I once heard a conversation between friends of mine that were into comic books, they were trying to figure out how much a particular collectible comic was actually worth. While they could not agree on a price, they did agree on a principle, any item is worth as much as someone is willing to pay for it. Here's how you can confidently 'size' yourself correctly. God, the creator of all things bought you at the cost of his own life. There is not price higher than that. But before you go getting too big headed about

it, he also paid that price for every other person in creation, past, present and future. There is not a single person anywhere on this planet that is any more or less precious to God. Our value and what we can offer comes only from God because of what he was willing to pay for us. When it comes to using your gifts to serve others, Jesus says it's not about upsizing yourself, making yourself look greater or being jealous of those who seem to have up-sized gifts. Neither is it about downsizing and doing nothing because you believe you have very little. Faith formed service is about having a right sized view of God, a right-sized view of self and right sized view of the world that God loves

9. In what ways have these scriptures and this study challenged your perception and valuation of yourself?

10. How have your perceptions of others been challenged or changed?



LIVE purposefully

One of the things the Apostle Paul is keen to remind people of was that we were not meant to do this alone; that a vital part of a life of faith was to live it out in community. Faith formed service happens both within and through the church. To use Paul's 'body' analogy, God gifts each of us with different skills and gifts to help support and encourage other parts of the body. None are more important than the others (even pastors), but each have a unique role to play and each has something to offer. In the same way, the Body of Christ, the church, has something to offer which the world desperately needs, that is the gospel message of the life, love, and grace which can be found through Jesus Christ. The way we display that love to each other and the world, is how we serve because it is how Christ served us.

11. A number of years ago there was a book and then a movie called 'Pay it Forward'. It was based on a concept of rather than paying someone back for acts of kindness they might have shown you, you pay it forward and bless someone else. In light of all Jesus has done for you, who could you 'pay forward' the love of Jesus to this week?

12. Think about the skills, interests, passions and talents that God has given you. You might like to do this individually or as a group, but get creative and think about how you could utilise all those gifts to serve God and serve others with his love.



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for all the gifts and talents he has given you and for the price he paid to make you his own.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you use all the gifts, talents and abilities that God has given you to grow his Kingdom and help others.
- Pray for those who are 'downsizing' themselves and who feel insignificant and alone. Pray that God would help them realise how much he values them and lead them to a community where his love will be shown to them and they will find a place to belong.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], God has perfectly made you to serve. Amen