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“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5,15, 16).

## Ready to Serve

**Central Truth:** Be willing to minister at any time.

**L175. Date:** January 1995. **Text:** Mark 3:1-6; Romans 12:1-2, 6-8.

**Topic:** Ministry; Service.

Do you remember the basic principle of Christian service? “Find a need and fill it!” Think about the elements of that statement. (1) You must seek opportunities if you would serve. It is up to you to “find” a need. Do not wait for needs to seek you. Be ready to serve, and you will see many opportunities. (2) You must be concerned about people with “needs” if you would serve your Lord. Christian service is meeting the needs of hurting people in the name of the Lord. (3) When you find a need, whatever it may be, “fill” it. That is, do whatever is necessary to relieve the problem. Thus you are serving your Lord.

Jesus set the example. He said, “*Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth*” (Luke 22:27). No task was too lowly for our Lord, not even washing His disciples' feet (John 13:3-5).

This Lord's Day is the first day of 1995. It is a good day to dedicate yourself to faithful service to your Lord.

## Jesus Set an Example by Serving (Mark 3,1-10)

**He served in spite of prejudiced people** (verses 1-5). He was pursued by opponents who sought to catch Him in some act by which they could accuse or discredit Him. The presence of a man with a withered hand aroused no sympathy in them. They were more concerned about whether Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath. And Jesus did! His concern was in

helping hurting people. If others approved, fine; if they disapproved, fine. Their prejudice did not affect His ministry.

How about you? Does the attitude of your peers influence your service for your Lord? Are you intimidated by their opinions? Does your fear of people surpass your commitment to serving people in the name of the Lord? Never!

**He served in spite of persecution** (verse 6). Jesus healed the man in the presence of all who were in the synagogue. He had the man stand publicly, reach out his crippled hand, and He made it whole. What a miracle! Everyone who witnessed it would praise God, would they not? No, they would not. The Pharisees present went out and joined forces with the Herodians (their own opponents) to determine how they might destroy Jesus.

Would you serve people in the name of Jesus if you knew it would bring opposition and danger to you? Jesus did. He is our example. We should follow His steps (I Peter 2:21). He served in spite of pressures (verses 7-9). Jesus was increasing in popularity among the people at this point in His ministry. He said to His disciples, *“Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat”* (Mark 6:31). Even when He tried to withdraw, a great multitude from all over the region followed Him. (Note that the names of six areas are given.) They pressed upon Him, seeking to touch Him in order to be healed. He had to enter a boat in order to keep from being crushed by the crowd. Would He ignore them, send them away, or go across the Sea of Galilee to escape them? No. He was concerned about the people, so He ministered to their needs.

If you ever get “too busy” to serve people in the name of Jesus, remember His example. You are never too busy to do good.

**He served wherever there were needs** (verse 10). Remember the statement, “Find a need and fill it.” Jesus is conscious of needs. A mother may have six children, but the one who is hurting gets her immediate attention. Jesus may be surrounded by hundreds of people, but the ones who are hurting get His attention. Thank You Lord for being merciful.

Who gets your attention? The New Testament records over one hundred miracles that were performed by Jesus and His disciples. And every miracle met a need. Not one was for display. God hurts when we hurt (Isaiah 63:9). He knows our trials (Hebrews 4:15). He hastens to help (Hebrews 2:18). You can follow His example.

**We Follow Jesus' Example by Serving (Romans 12:1-8)**

Romans 12 is one of the most challenging passages in the Bible, calling us to a Christian lifestyle. It shows that a Christian lifestyle involves serving people in the name of Christ.

**Be available.** *“Present your bodies”* (verse 1). Notice how physical the command is. We say, “Give your heart to Jesus”; Paul says, “Present your bodies.” Our emphasis is on salvation; Paul's is on service. Each of us must be *“a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work”* (II Timothy 2:21). After all, we are saved for the purpose of glorifying God (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14) through our lifestyle (Ephesians 2:10). We talk about dedication and rededication as if that were normal in the Christian life. No! We are each to *“present”* (offer up as a sacrifice on the altar) our bodies and never take them for non-Christian use again. You cannot be like Jesus unless you resolve, like Him, to *“do always those things that please him”* (John 8:29). Therefore, be available.

**Be separate.** *“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (verse 2). You cannot be committed *“to”* without being separated *“from.”* You must turn from the world in order to be available to God. Paul reminds us that every soldier has to leave civilian affairs behind if he would be a good soldier (II Timothy 2:4). Just so, every Christian must be separate from the unregenerate society to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. God's call has always been, *“Touch no unclean thing; . . . be ye clean”* (Isaiah 52:11). The world is crucified to the Christian and the Christian to the world (Galatians 6:14). But the world is very much with us. We can be separate only by the constant renewing of our minds.

**Be pliable.** *“Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (verse 2). When one becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus, everything about him changes. He has a complete change of mind, with new ideals and a new attitude. For him, *“old things are passed away; . . . all things are become new”* (II Corinthians 5:17). That new mind must work to transform the whole person into a lifestyle which is approved of God. Old habits must be cast off, and new ones must be formed. That person must cleanse himself of all internal and external defilement, perfecting holiness in deep reverence of God. He must be willing for God to change him.

**Be involved.** Believers have *“gifts differing according to the grace that is given to”* them (verses 6-8). Every person is saved to serve. The ultimate purpose of salvation is that God may be glorified (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). But our service is not rendered in the strength of the flesh. We are at war with spiritual forces, and that conflict reaches to the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12).

How, then, can we serve effectively? God has given to each Christian a capacity to serve Him effectively in some area of Christian ministry. That capacity was given at his conversion — his spiritual birth. Each Christian should discern his personal spiritual gift, develop his expertise in the use of that gift, and devote the rest of his life to using that gift in service to people. Each gift is for the purpose of serving others. Romans 12:6-8 lists the gifts as prophecy (proclaiming God's message), ministry (serving the needs of people), teaching (interpreting and applying God's Word to human affairs), exhorting (giving practical counsel), giving (sharing resources to promote the work of God), leading (administration), and showing mercy. (Another list of spiritual gifts is found in I Corinthians 12.) Which of those gifts do you have? How will you use it (or them) in service to the good of people and the glory of God? You will be most effective in the area of God's gift to you.

To serve like Jesus is to “spend and be spent” (II Corinthians 12:15), to give your resources (spend) and yourself (be spent) to help other people. “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow his steps” (I Peter 2:21).

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. How was Jesus opposed in His ministry of serving?
2. How might you be opposed in your ministry?
3. How did Jesus deal with the pressures of serving?
4. How should you deal with being “too busy” to serve others?
5. How can you make sure you are available to serve God?
6. How can you be separated for service to God?
7. How can you be “renewed” in the spirit of your mind?
8. Which spiritual gift (capacity to serve) has God given you?
9. What practical service are you rendering to God?
10. How can you be more available and effective this year?