



Female Ministers

"...the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

(Matthew 20:28)

Our Christian duty requires obedience to the example Jesus left for us while He walked this earth. His life was marked by servitude; perhaps this seems easier for a male in the congregation to engage in, but what about the girls? Where's our place of service if it's not in the pulpit or the consistory? Are those of us who are single limited to nursery duty and teaching Sunday School?

Sometimes we mistakenly think that serving the Lord begins once we arrive where we believe He wants us to be. "Once I get my teaching/counseling/music degree, I can really focus on ministering to others using the gifts He has given me"; "Two more weeks until my mission trip to Haiti where I'll really be able to show others the love of Christ by helping those who are much less fortunate than I am"; or "if only I was married with a family of my own to serve!"

Give your alms in secret (Matthew 6:3-4)

Most of us, if we're honest, don't mind serving the Lord if we're given the place in the spotlight. Popularity, fame, a note of recognition, the adventure of traveling to a foreign country – it's easy to serve when there's something in it for us. We think we can handle teaching a Sunday School class or going on a summer mission trip, but what do we do with the opportunities God gives us that seem exceedingly simple? Truth is, the opportunities to serve our own congregation are limited only by the number of times we are willing to die to ourselves in order to give to the Lord. Christian service, at its heart, requires the sacrifice of personal gain so that Christ would be ultimately glorified.

Be approachable (Matthew 14:14; Mark 10:45)

Many times we balk at the idea of spending time with people "beneath" us. We forget what kind of people swarmed Jesus and sought Him out. He had compassion on multitudes of harlots, thieves, tax collectors, beggars, and those who would ultimately betray Him. Though He was the King of kings in flesh, Jesus didn't possess an air of "untouchable" super-stardom. He was approachable, just as we ought to be. Servants of Christ don't make others feel as though they are inconveniencing them by saying "hello" or even asking for help.

Do the dirty work: wash feet (John 13:14-17)

A clear example was set for us when Jesus washed the disciples' feet. The Son of God stooped to do a job that was far below the weight of His glory. He scrubbed the filth and sweat off of twenty-four grungy feet willingly and told us to do the same.

It can be tempting to find ways the congregation is failing to meet our perceived needs, but let us try instead to fill genuine ones. Head over to the nursery perhaps, and relieve the mother who finds herself overloaded with a diaper bag, a wailing baby, and a runny-nosed toddler hiding in her skirt while her husband attends to his duties in the consistory room post-service. A card, picture, or a few lines of encouragement slipped into the mailbox of someone in the congregation (a widow, a married couple longing for children of their own, the new girl who hasn't seemed to have found her

place) can bring meaning to their life as well as yours. Nights where we find ourselves going to bed early because there are no social activities scheduled can be boring at best and can be perfect opportunities to give up the luxury of spending, more time in bed by taking the "night shift" for a new mom or a care-giver for a dying parent/spouse.

You are a member of the body, you make a difference (1 Cor. 12:18-19)

We miss out on opportunities to serve when we think that certain things are not important or holy enough for God to use for His glory. Consider what church would be like if no one ever greeted you at the door, handed out church bulletins, set up the communion table, posted the Psalter selections on the board, ran the sound equipment, or turned on the percolator.

The secret to being a good servant is understood when we recognize importance as members of one Body whose duty is to reflect the image of Christ. It is humbling that any of us would be called to minister on Jesus' behalf, whether it be as a finger or the head. Greatness lies not in the servant, but in the One we serve.

Some practical ways to serve your congregation might include getting together with friends to do the following:

- Cook up a gourmet meal and deliver it to a new mom.
- Host a baking fest, divide the goodies into tins, and bring them to the shut-in with a cheery smile.
- Make it your mission to visit each elderly couple in your church this year – they have so much wisdom to share! Offer to do some light house cleaning or odd jobs while you're there.
- Fold bulletins.
- Deliver tracts/flyers on behalf of the evangelism committee.
- Play the piano (or some other instrument) for your monthly singsong at a local nursing home.
- Learn how to use the coffee-maker and make a basic pot of tea so you can pitch in on kitchen duty during church bridal and baby showers.
- Stack/set up chairs.
- Hold little ones so mothers can talk.
- Sew gifts for new babies.
- Make creative birthday cards or write notes of encouragement.
- Pray for those in need.

There is great joy in serving the Lord when you put Jesus first, Others second, and Yourself last. This is how martyrs can die with smiles on their faces and Christians can sing in prison. This is how we can change diapers, pick up garbage in the foyer, be a friend to the friendless, and engage in other activities that may go unnoticed by the common eye. For inasmuch as we serve the least of those in the congregation, we serve the Lord (Matthew 25:40).

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