



LEAP OF FAITH

WEEK 4 - HANDS: SERVING OUR 5

Introduction

This week we conclude our Leap of Faith series with a study and lab on exercising our faith through practical service of our five.

Before you begin, why don't you spend some time sharing about how the Leap process has been going with your five? Have you seen signs of the Spirit as a result of prayer? Have you had any chance yet to extend hospitality or lavish your time/money on your five?

This final movement of the soul, to meet practical needs, is in some respect the easiest and also the hardest thing to do among prayer, hospitality, and spending time/money. It is easy to serve someone who will receive it, but many in Silicon Valley are not used to being served outside of paying for services. If you need a babysitter, you hire one. If you need movers, you hire them, ride to the airport? Call the shuttle, etc. Serving also can become a drag and a dysfunctional way of relating when we bring our wounds to it. The script many of us carry is, "If I serve you, then you will love me back. You have to love me in return.", or "If I am useful, then people will want me around." This is not the Gospel. Tonight's study and lab will give us a chance to reflect on ways to redeem service to its rightful place as the ministry of Jesus and the love that springs from hearts who have been served by God.

Warm up questions:

1. Have you ever experienced serving (either giving or receiving) in such a way that you sensed the presence of Jesus and were drawn, through the experience of service, to know and love Him more?
2. Even though we know, from happiness research and Jesus' sayings/example, that the life of service to others in His Name is the best life, we all have a dysfunctional script (or set of scripts) around service. What, in your life, tends to corrupt serving, being served by others, or make you draw back from living a life of service?

Examples:

- "I need to take care of all my needs myself. Being served is really uncomfortable for me." (Usually a male script in a family in which the women expressed all the vulnerability.)
- "I am incompetent in practical areas. I don't have the gift of serving. I can give money." (also, usually a male script)
- "I am so busy. If I spend time serving people that won't be any fun and there won't be any time for me."
- "I served too much in the past and I burned out. I have to protect myself with "good boundaries" so I won't burn out again. I only serve when I feel it won't strain me." (see also the above scripts)

Scripture Study:

Context: Paul's letter to the Philippians, like Peter's letter we studied in week 1, was written to a group of people who were struggling to follow Jesus in a society that was hostile to them because of Jesus. Jesus was too exclusive, too Jewish/foreign, too threatening to the Roman world's status quo. The Philippian church had experienced persecution that had made them draw back from their early enthusiasm when Paul and his companions introduced them to Jesus. They had lost status as they became known as followers of Jesus; some had lost livelihoods, all were under the threat property being confiscated, being imprisoned, etc. Paul calls them deeper into representing Jesus in the world and sharing His abundant life no matter what others thought of them.

Read Philippians 2:5-13

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. – ESV

Discussion Questions:

1. Putting yourself in the Philippian's shoes, how would this description of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have encouraged you to a life of active service in the world? How would it have frightened you?
2. Jesus was a **free** Jewish citizen; in what ways did he become a "servant"? Think of various stories in the Gospels in which he chooses to serve others when he could have demanded their service as a Rabbi, as the Messiah, as God in the flesh.
3. If Jesus is the prime example of what a "good" (both morally and in terms of functioning) human being is, what a human being *was meant to be*, what does his life tell us about where our true potential lays? Why do you think we forget this or resist it?
4. Where is your heart/mind in believing that service, humility, dying (psychically – to self-focused living) in obedience to God, leads to resurrection, exaltation, and a glorious reputation (a name above other names)?
 - Is that something you want your life to amount to or are you tempted to settle for an American middle class "normal" Christian life and death?
 - How have you seen, in even small ways, God lifting you up (or others) when you've obeyed God and taken upon yourself the "form of a servant"?

5. What is there to “fear” in v. 12-13? What is there to take great comfort in?
6. How can we encourage one another in “having the mind” and hands of Christ as we seek to take a leap of faith? How can we maintain the sense of adventure and even “fun” in the process of “taking the form of a servant”?

Lab: Serving Your Five

Prayer and Current Stories:

- The first and maybe the greatest service we can do for another person is to ask God to bless them regularly. In this case we certainly do good to them and we do no harm. (This cannot be said of our words or deeds, which are always a mixture of help and harm.) So, even if you are a homebound sick person or a new mom w/two other kids under 5, by lifting up our community and the members of your five in prayer that they would experience the riches of Jesus’ love and goodness, you are serving them.
- Hopefully, as we have prayed over the past weeks we have gotten closer in our hearts to what our five really are going through, where their true needs lie. Maybe Jesus is already showing you ways to serve them? If so, maybe you can share with the group in order to encourage them or prompt their own holy creativity?

Meet a Practical Need

For example; helping someone’s five move, painting their kitchen, giving a couple w/young kids a date night, etc. . .

- After praying for a member of your five, the next, most meaningful service to most of us in Silicon Valley is to have another person listen to us and be truly present without advice giving or waiting to get their point in. (This is hospitality of soul.) Maybe you can serve others in this Leap of Faith by being radically present when others are talking to you vs. feeling the immediate tug to get back to your own work/agenda. At work try sitting down next to the person vs. standing. In a neighborhood, walk alongside them to their house or invite them to come inside your place and chat longer.
- Talk through as a group each other’s five’s practical needs. Perhaps there is something that just emerges as an obvious way to help as a whole small group or ways that my skill might meet one of your five’s need. For example, I may be a good housepainter and have equipment and your friend needs help on a Saturday painting their house.
- Find out what resources you could offer to help meet this need as a group. Contact the person with the practical need if scheduling a time is necessary.
- Another service that Jesus offered was touch and blessing in prayer. He did this when he healed people and just when he wanted to bless the children who wanted to get close to him. If your friend has a need greater than what you can meet, like a chronic health problem themselves or in a member of their family, you could take the Leap of Faith to ask them if you can pray for them and gently lay your hand on their shoulder. It doesn’t have to be extended prayer ministry or even prayer with eyes closed. This

takes discernment whether such a leap of faith will be received or feel forced to your friend. But, boldness in asking, giving your friend permission to not pray this way, is in keeping with the risks the early Christians took to extend the healing ministry of Jesus into the world. Historians tell us that it was through healings, radical hospitality, service to the poor and needy, and a community of love one another that the church spread throughout the Roman Empire like wildfire. (This is also how the church is growing so fast in Africa, Asia, and Latin America)

Serving Your Five by Serving Together or Inviting Them to Serve You

Perhaps you are getting closer to a member of your five who has no visible needs except the need to serve themselves. There are two ways we can serve friends who are so together:

1. Suggest serving projects you can do side-by-side like tutoring children/youth in an underperforming school, volunteering with the homeless or the food banks or village harvest community fruit tree work (<http://www.villageharvest.org/>), park/neighborhood clean up, pick your own volunteer project.
2. An even more profound way of serving our friends or those acquaintances we want to develop a friendship with is to *invite them* to serve us. This is what Jesus did with the woman at the well in John 4; it puts them in the power position when we are vulnerable with our needs. It breaks down the prison walls of self-reliance we have in our culture. What practical needs might you have, that God has placed in your life, so that others might serve you?
 - One guideline in this area: we should be asking, in our first encounters, for something small vs. putting our friend in an awkward position of saying "no" if it's too inconveniencing. Jesus asked the woman for a *cup* of water, not for her to haul water for all the disciples and their donkeys.

Where to After This Week?

Hopefully, your hospitality event(s) are coming along soon. After those, after Easter, it would be good to evaluate together how Leap has gone for you all as a group in terms of prayer, hospitality, currency, and service, as well as any personal areas you have been pressing into God for. How has your faith been strengthened as you have ventured out? Where have you seen Jesus or felt an absence in this process? How has the experience brought up hard things in terms of past feelings about evangelism, feelings of inadequacy/isolation, etc.? How has this experience built bonds of trust among you all?