

A SERVING PEOPLE

—WEEK 4—

There is no question that the culture is having a great effect on the body of Christ today. Often times, we are swimming in the discipleship of the world and we don't even realize it. As Eugene Peterson says, "It is nearly as hard for a sinner to recognize the world's temptations as it is for a fish to discover impurities in the water."

One way we can see this playing out is in our commitments to the body of Christ. One study shows that the average church attendance is 1 to 2 times a month. Far from the "day by day" commitment that the early church was making to one another (Acts 2:46)!

Now, there are no doubt many reasons for this change. There are so many things competing for our Sundays—our kid's travel sports, our hobbies, Netflix, or even St. Mattress. There's the push towards being "spiritual" rather than organized religion. More than anything, our hyper-individualized culture has made our freedom an idol. The less restraints the better.

As Christians, we are not anti-freedom. We just long for true freedom that is found in Christ alone. As Tim Keller says, "Freedom is not the absence of limitations and constraints but it is finding the right ones, those that fit our nature and liberate us."

Our Church Covenant reads: "We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others. We will serve one another, using the gifts God has granted to us through the Holy Spirit that this fellowship would be built up in Christ."

The first commitment we need to make is this: we will be with God's people. When it's possible, we will prioritize gathering together with our church family. If this is not a commitment for us and for our families then we will suffer. Our church will suffer too. When we are absent everyone suffers.

We underestimate how much we need our church family *and* how much our church family needs us. The consistent encouragement, accountability, love, and presence of God's family are vital to our spiritual lives. When we are gone, we miss out on stirring one another up.

The second commitment we must make is this: we will serve God's people. One of the greatest hindrances to fruitful ministry is God's people seeing themselves as consumers in the church. What does the church offer for me today? How can my needs be met?

But Jesus himself says: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” What if we lived with the mind of Christ? What if we were selfless servants like Christ? What if we walked in on Sundays saying, “I am going to focus on serving rather than being served. I want to be a provider of ministry rather than just a consumer of ministry. I want to welcome a visitor. I want to pray with someone. Or even, I want to change a dirty diaper for the glory of God today!”

Meditate on God’s Word

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

—Heb 10:19-25

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

—1 Peter 4:10-11

Questions for Application

1. How do you see the hyper-individualized culture in our world today? How do you see it shaping our church? How has it shaped your own heart?
2. How can our church break the trend of church attendance being optional? How can we be committed to being present and serving one another?
3. Peter tells us that we all have received gifts. Where are some areas that God is calling you to serve his body? What are your greatest obstacles to selfless service?

Close by praying as a group that God would help us be committed to and serve one another.