

# **The Importance of the New Testament Doctrine Of Selfless Service and Disciple Making**

copyright Will Ghormley, 2016

*"It's not my goal to be offensive, but to rightly divide the Word."*

<b>Making Disciples Modeling Selflessness.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Voluntary Service is Selfless Service.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Serving Selflessly Creates Disciples Who Serve Selflessly.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Self-Serving Service isn't Godly Service, But Hinders the Gospel.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Selfless Service Receives a Reward In Heaven.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Disciples Are To Serve Selflessly.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>God's Love Is Selfless and Humble.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>God's Selfless Love, Shed Abroad In Our Hearts, Gives.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The Workman Is Worthy of His Wage.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>The Doctrine Of Selflessly Giving To Others Is Not A Foundation For Religious Employment.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Kicking Against the Goads.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## Making Disciples Modeling Selflessness

The Great Commission, (Matthew 28:18-20), is Jesus' parting instructions to the Body of Christ. Apart from glorifying God with our yielded lives, there is no greater purpose for the Body of Christ than making disciples after the pattern of Jesus. In disciple making, the most appropriate axiom is, "Actions speak louder than words." If our lives don't exhibit the selflessness of our Savior, we're not making disciples modeled on Jesus, but on ourselves.

Our living testimony must not conform to the selfish pattern of this world, but be transformed through God's Word into beacons of selflessness in the image of Christ, (Roman 12:1-3, Ephesians 5:25-27). The Apostle Paul explains what this selflessness looks like in his soaring prose from Philippians. This we must read and understand if we are to make disciples in the selfless image of Jesus.

"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I deem all things to be detriment in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and consider them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

"Not that I have already obtained or have already become perfect, but I press on, so I may lay hold of that, for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus!

"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal, for the prize of the higher invitation of God in Christ Jesus!

"Let us therefore, as many as are mature, have this opinion of one's self; and if in anything you have a differing opinion of yourself, God, \*by you, shall be revealing. However, whereto we have already attained, to the same fundamentals be observing, to the same rules be disposed. Brethren, become imitators together with me, and observe those walking according to our model." Philippians 3:7-17

\*(G5213 humin - not translated in most texts, but indicates by your actions)

The Apostle Paul beautifully and eloquently describes how selflessness compelled him to turn away from anything that was to his personal advantage. He also explains why: for the sake of Christ, to be found IN Him, for the righteousness that comes from God by faith, to know the power of Jesus' resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, to be conformed to Jesus' selflessness in dieing for us, in order that, dying to self, Paul can attain to the resurrection from the dead!

The Apostle Paul goes on to explain how he hasn't attained to this lofty ideal: but forgetting past failures, he presses on toward the prize, the higher invitation of God that is in the selflessness of Christ Jesus! With this exhibition and explanation of a selfless life, Paul describes selflessness as the Hallmark of maturity. He then encourages every Believer to have this same desire to imitate selflessness. THIS, is the beating heart of discipleship, modeling selflessness!

## **Voluntary Service is Selfless Service**

Selfless service is the Scriptural model we are to follow. Even though God's servants have the right to an earthly reward for their service to God, selflessness works for a reward in heaven and not in this life. Do not store-up here on earth, but hoard for tomorrow in heaven, for wherever your storehouse is your heart is also, (Matthew 6:19-21). Jesus set that example for us on the cross. In Scripture, God's servants live a life of selfless service as the example for every Believer to follow.

Since every Believer's job is to make disciples, selflessness must be the model of Biblical discipleship. If God's servants work for an earthly reward, (in the form of a paycheck), what type of discipleship are they modeling? Is it not, serve God and get paid for your service? How then can they encourage anyone to serve God without becoming a paid employee? If everyone who volunteers in the church were to follow the example set by the paid employees, they would require a paycheck as well. When an employee asks the congregation to work voluntarily, the message sent is: "Do as I say and not as I do."

To illustrate making disciples after the selfless image of Jesus, the Holy Spirit instructs God's servants to serve voluntarily as an example for the Body of Christ.

"I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes, (all forms of payment in the ancient world). You yourselves know that these hands provided for my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, That He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:33-35

Jesus modeled selflessness for the Body of Christ. Paul reminds the Body of Christ's example and teaches the doctrine of selfless service as the model for God's servants to imitate. Paul "showed" fellow Believers how it's done. Paul said in this way we "must" help the weak. The Greek word translated here as "must" is the same word Jesus used with Zacchaeus when Jesus said, "You MUST be born again." Jesus won't force anyone to be born again, but to enter into heaven we MUST be born again. Likewise, if Believers want to help the weak, we MUST serve God voluntarily, working to support ourselves. "For we are not like many, who are marketing the Word of God..." 2 Corinthians 2:17.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-10 "Now we COMMAND you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an undisciplined life and not according to the orders which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner as without orders among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat either."

Here the Body of Christ is commanded to avoid every fellow Believer who doesn't imitate the example of selfless service modeled by the Apostle Paul and his companions. In defense of the religious doctrine of vocational ministry, (getting paid to serve God), some claim Paul was just showing folks they should work for a living and not leach off the Body of Christ. But in Paul's example, fellow servants of God are not exempt from following Paul's example. Rather, the example is set for God's servants not to be a

burden to their fellow Believers. Paul preaches and teaches the doctrine of not being a burden to those you minister to. This is an example the Apostle Paul was steadfast to live by throughout his ministry.

In the world, people give to get. You work to get paid. You love to be loved in return. "What's in it for Me?" That's the motto of this world. The Apostle Paul, by imitating Jesus and teaching selflessness, breaks this model of selfishness. In this, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is set apart from the selfishness of the world. The free gift of God's salvation through Jesus was always free to those who were being ministered to. This is a principle the Apostle Paul taught in every Church and epistle.

Paul gives to give, not to get in return like the world. The selfless love of God in Paul's heart is manifested in voluntary, selfless, service.

## **Serving Selflessly Creates Disciples Who Serve Selflessly**

This act of giving was modeled by the Believers of the New Testament as well. They gave of themselves in order to give the Gospel of Jesus to others. The practice was never to give to get something in return. Early congregations gave to others without an expectation of getting anything in return. They supported the ministry of Paul as he preached the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul didn't ask for their financial support. Paul preached regardless of his financial condition.

"Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Nevertheless, you have done well to share in my affliction. You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the Gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent more than once for my needs. NOT THAT I SEEK THE GIFT ITSELF, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. (Philippians 4:11-17)

Paul didn't covet money from the Philippians. Paul took joy in the heavenly reward coming to the Philippians' for selflessly sharing the Gospel of Jesus through Paul. Quite the contrary to coveting support, the Apostle Paul viewed the occasional necessity of financial aid with distaste!

"Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the Gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other congregations by taking rations to serve you; and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my needs, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.

"As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting." (2 Corinthians 11:7-12)

Paul refused to accept payment from those he ministered to. In this way, he cut off opportunity for everyone who charged a fee to preach to be regarded as the Apostle Paul and his fellow workers were. Selfless service was the definitive barrier between those who served sincerely as serving God, and those who served themselves, (2 Corinthians 2:17).

The Apostle Paul made disciples modeling selflessness. He preached the Gospel without charge and without being a burden. As a result, Paul's disciples likewise selflessly gave of themselves. They used their resources to send the Gospel to others through the Apostle Paul. They did not give to get in return, but gave selflessly of themselves so others could receive the Gospel through Paul. Making disciples after the selfless image of Jesus results in disciples who selflessly make more disciples!

## **Self-Serving Service isn't Godly Service, But Hinders the Gospel**

To the Believers in Thessalonica, Paul explains that his selfless service is an example so they would conduct themselves in a manner worthy of God. "For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the Gospel of God. You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you Believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father his children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

As a servant laboring to build-up Believers, the Apostle Paul explains the natural role of those who nurture and those whom they are nurturing. 2 Corinthians 12:14-15 "Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but YOU; for children are not responsible to save up for parents, but parents for children. I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, (than those who charge a fee to preach, 2 Corinthians 11:12), am I to be loved less?"

While the Apostle Paul specifically serves selflessly as an example for us to follow, he also explains why selflessness is important. In 1 Corinthians 9:12, Paul explains he serves selflessly so as not to create a hindrance to the Gospel. The Greek word translated as "hindrance" is a military word which means to dig a trench in the road to slow an advance. Insisting on being paid to preach the Gospel can hinder the Gospel in several ways.

First, if financial compensation is required for service, the Gospel won't be preached unless somebody is paying for it. God never intended His free gift of salvation to require money to spread. Think about that. In God's strategy for everyone to hear the Gospel, where does God intend for the Gospel to depend on peoples' ability to pay? In God's plan for the spiritual growth of the Body of Christ, at what point does God intend for His children's spiritual growth to depend on them paying for it? How can God's free gift of salvation be called free if God's plan is for preachers to be paid to spread the Gospel? God never intended for His children to be a business opportunity for the professional class, (John 2:16). God never intended for the professional class to make a profit from His family, (2 Peter 2:3). No, God intended for the free gift of Salvation to spread spontaneously from one person to the next...like a smile.

Secondly, requiring payment to preach the Gospel raises the questions in some people's minds as to the motivation for preaching the Gospel. Paul said his selfless service set him apart from those who wanted to be paid, (2 Corinthians 11:12). In 2 Corinthians 2:17, Paul pointed out he doesn't peddle the Gospel for payment as many do, but with the sincerity born of wanting nothing in return. Paul describes this motivation as from God. How many people reject the Gospel using the excuse, "All those preachers are alike. They just want my money?" This is a hindrance to spreading the Gospel. Paul taught spreading the Gospel was more important than getting paid to do it. Paul preaches the Gospel for the sake of the Gospel and not to get anything in return. The Apostle Paul said, follow this example, (Acts 20:32-35, 1 Corinthians 4:1,12,16-17, 11:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, Philippians 3:7-20).

Third, Paul says he serves God selflessly so he can win more souls in 1 Corinthians 9:19. Winning souls should be the only motivation for preaching the Gospel. If earning a living is more important than winning more souls, this explains everything about where that preacher's heart is. The Word of God is

alive and active, able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart, (Hebrews 4:12). Have you ever wondered how that is possible? It's simple. What people chose to believe from the Word of God reflects what's in their hearts. If their hearts are selfless, their understanding of Scripture reflects selflessness. If their hearts are selfish, they interpret Scripture to gain personal benefit at the expense of others or at the exclusion of others.

Anyone can preach the Gospel, from good motivations or bad.

Philippians 1:15-18 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the Gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.

Paul can rejoice even when the Gospel is being preached from bad motivations because the Gospel is the power of God for salvation, (Romans 1:16). God's Word does not return void, but accomplishes what God desires, (Isiah 55:11). While being self-serving hinders the Gospel, (1 Corinthians 9:12), nothing can stop the Gospel. However, we would bear much fruit, not hinder the Gospel, and win more souls to Christ, (1 Corinthians 9:19), if we served selflessly.

## **Selfless Service Receives a Reward In Heaven**

By serving selflessly, the Apostle Paul indicates his reward is in heaven, (1 Corinthians 9:17-18), in accordance with the teachings of Jesus. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart is also," (Matthew 6:19-21). Because the Apostle Paul lived and ministered selflessly after meeting Jesus on the road, Paul knew his reward was in heaven, (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

In 1 Corinthians 9:17-18, Paul explains the spiritual dynamics of preaching the Gospel. An accurate translation of the Greek reads, "For if voluntarily I am busy with (preaching), I am having a reward. Yet if not voluntary, I am entrusted as a manager." In other words, if Paul preaches voluntarily, he has a reward in heaven. If he preaches not voluntarily but for pay, he has a job as a manager entrusted to him.

The Apostle Peter also preaches this doctrine of selfless service and eternal reward.

"Therefore I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God you are among, exercising responsibility, not because you have to, but voluntarily and not for sordid gain, but eagerly, and not as being lords over those allotted, but as becoming models for the flocklet. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading wreath of glory." 1 Peter 5:1-4

Both the Apostles Peter and Paul explain that a paycheck shouldn't be the reward for ministry. Both Peter and Paul teach this selfless doctrine is the example to be set for God's people. If God's servants serve voluntarily, without expectation of an earthly reward, there will be an eternal reward in heaven, just as Jesus has said.

Further understanding of this can be found in the Holy Spirit's explanation of building with wood hay and stubble in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. Paul is using himself and Apollos as examples of God's servants, planting and watering and doing the work of the ministry. He then reveals how every man's ministry will be judged by fire, based on the motivation for the work of the ministry.

Each servant of God builds on the foundation of Christ. A workman can build with gold, which is the truth of the Gospel. A workman can build with silver, which is purity of motivation. A workman can build with precious stones, which are the lives of the redeemed, built up into the dwelling place of the Living God. The only aspect of earthly ministry which will transcend time and space to inhabit heaven for eternity, are the living stones we build up into the dwelling place of the Most High. The people of God are the living stones. Investing truth and purity of heart into building up individual spiritual lives has an eternal reward.

But servants of God can also build with wood, hay, and stubble. These represent accomplishment in this world that are temporal, earthy, and will not transcend time and space to inhabit heaven for eternity. Every physical aspect of the Christian religion that isn't redeemed lives falls into this category. Church

buildings, ministry structure, bank accounts, physical assets, all of these will be destroyed by fire because they are not eternal living beings. They will never make it to heaven. They have no eternal value to God.

Here is the interesting thing. Each man's work will become evident on that day when it will be revealed with fire. What appears to be "ministry" is indistinguishable from actual "ministry" as far as most folks can tell. They won't know the difference until one is consumed by fire and the other isn't. Only those things with eternal value will be left.

If any man has built fine impressive church buildings, those things will be lost. But, if God's servants have invested themselves in building up the spiritual lives of the living stones making up God's dwelling place, that will have eternal reward. The earthly accomplishments will be a total loss, but those men will be saved even though they get no credit for what they accomplished.

Selflessly investing ourselves in the eternal lives of individuals has an eternal reward. Building up edifices to our own accomplishments has no reward.

## **Disciples Are To Serve Selflessly**

Some would have us believe the Apostle Paul's selfless life was an anomaly and not an example for the Body of Christ to imitate. But Scripture itself proves Paul was preaching Biblical doctrine. God intends for us to understand and obey this doctrine, otherwise, the Holy Spirit wouldn't have given it as Scripture, (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Not only was Paul not an anomaly, but Scripture reveals how his fellow workers also modeled the example of selfless service. Scripture contrasts this selfless service against others who serve their own interests and not those of Christ.

Philippians 2:19-21 "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus."

2 Corinthians 12:16-18 "But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit. Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I? I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?"

These are the disciples who are made in the image of selflessness. But Scripture also exposes those who walk after their own self-interest.

2 Corinthians 2:17 For we are not like many, peddling the Word of God, but sharing as from sincerity, but sharing as from God, we speak as in Christ in the sight of God!

Preaching the Word selflessly is being IN Christ and being selfless as Jesus is. Peddling the Word as a way to earn a living is not being in Christ. True Believers can peddle the Word of God and do on a daily basis. But, peddling the Word of God is not Christ-like, but in spite of Christ in us.

1 Thessalonians 2:5 For we never came with flattering speech as you know, nor with a veil hiding covetousness - God is witness -

Notice in both of these last accounts, the Apostle Paul invokes God as his witness as to the sincerity and purity of their motivations. The purity of their motivations is contrasted with the financial motivations of the MANY who do not serve selflessly.

The Apostle Paul is very clear in making a distinction between those who serve selflessly, and those who don't. "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." (Philippians 3:17)

## God's Love Is Selfless and Humble

The selfless love of God shed abroad in our hearts naturally results in selflessness and humility. The Old and New Testaments are monuments to God's selflessness. Humility and selflessness are the un-preached but ever-present doctrines of the New Testament. Every word reflects God's selflessness, but many Scriptures teach the doctrines of humility and selflessness.

Matthew 23:8-12 But do not be called Teacher; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called Leaders; for One is your Leader, the Anointing. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

In this passage, Jesus tries to teach us not to exalt ourselves or others, because we are all brothers and sisters. Specifically Jesus is warning us about putting mere humans in the roles ordained for the Trinity in the lives of Believers. In verse 8, we are told not to exalt ourselves as "Teachers", making our fellow Believers "students", because Jesus is our Teacher. Since Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, (John 1:1-5, 14), God's Word alone is the source of our teachings. No man should exalt himself as "teacher" in Jesus' place in the lives of Believers, contradicting the Word of God.

In verse 9, Jesus warns about putting anyone other than God the Father in the authority role of Father. No earthly man has the Fatherly authority to establish anything. Jesus was given all authority in heaven and earth, to be given back to the Father, (1 Corinthians 15:27-28), after all things have been subjected to Him. Jesus instructs Believers to make disciples in the nature and character of the Trinity, (Matthew 28:18-20), teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded, (God's Word, not men's teachings). Men only have the authority to speak the word of truth in love, (Ephesians 4:15), to build up, not to tear down, (Romans 14:19, 2 Corinthians 10:8, 13:10, Ephesians 4:12, 16). Men must not attempt to enforce authority in the place of God the Father over their fellow Believers! God's Word is the authority.

In verse 10, Jesus warns us not to pretend we are leaders of our brothers and sisters. Only God's Anointing is the head over every individual Believers, (1 Corinthians 11:3), to lead and guide them by the Holy Spirit, (John 16:13).

If we are not humble and selfless, but exalt ourselves and others as Teachers, Fathers, and Leaders, in the Trinity's place, we will be humbled in the presence of God, (verses 11 & 12). But everyone who serves selflessly as a slave, humbling themselves, will be exalted in the presence of the Father.

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

We are to be humble and selfless towards our brothers and sisters in Christ, honoring them by putting them before ourselves. Imagine if everyone in the Body of Christ took this message to heart!

Romans 15:1-3 We then that are strong in spirit ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not seek our own pleasure; each one of us striving to please his neighbor for his neighbors edification and good. For

also Christ didn't seek His own pleasure, but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.'

If we are strong in spirit, if we are mature, selflessly seeking the benefit of others is the Hallmark of maturity in Christ.

Philippians 2:1-7 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men.

If there is any possible spiritual benefit to be achieved, be united in spirit and purpose; be selfless and humble. Imitate Christ Jesus and seek the interest of others before yourselves.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.

Just because we are allowed to seek our own best interests, it isn't necessarily spiritually profitable for anyone. Even though we have the right to serve ourselves, it doesn't necessarily build anyone up spiritually. Don't seek your own benefit, but the benefit of others.

Galatians 5:13-14 For you were called into freedom brothers and sisters; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

While there is nothing unlawful about taking care of ourselves, the Law of God is fulfilled when we selflessly take care of each other.

1 Peter 5:5 You younger men likewise, yield to the mature. Yet all of you yield to one another wearing the servant's apron of humility, for "God does battle against the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

While it is wise for young men to yield to those who are spiritually mature, the standard set for spiritual maturity is humility and selflessness! In Philippians 3:7-17, the Apostle Paul expounds upon the virtues of selfless service. In verse 15, Paul holds up this selfless attitude as the Hallmark of "maturity" or "perfection". If those who presume to lead or teach are not modeling selflessness, no one is under compulsion to yield to their example, (1 Peter 5:3). The exhortation is to yield to selflessness modeled by a mature servant in Christ, not to a "Teacher", "Father", or "Leader", (Matthew 23:8-12). God does battle against those who exalt themselves.

## **God's Selfless Love, Shed Abroad In Our Hearts, Gives**

God's selfless love is shed abroad in our hearts, (Romans 5:5). Because of this, we are born again into an expression of selfless love that is giving in nature. Paul quoted Jesus Himself as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) This is the nature and character we are born into when we are born again of the Spirit. As we die to self every day and take up our cross, the selfless, giving, love of God can shine through our yielded lives.

### **God's selfless love expresses itself in a general spirit of giving to those in need:**

Matthew 6:3-4 "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

James 2:15-17 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled." and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead by itself.

Ephesians 4:28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy, to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

2 Corinthians 8:13-15 For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality - at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality; as it is written, "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack."

1 Titus 5:3, 9 Honor widows who are widows indeed...A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old...

This term "honor" means to value a person for who they are and is conditional, based on conduct. It also vaguely attaches a responsibility to care for those individuals who are "valued". When someone is valued and cared for, that care can take the form of physical things like service, food, or financial resources, but it means so much more. Honoring a person requires a spiritual awareness of how to best honor that individual, but "honor" is never reduced to the formula of a wage for services rendered. "Honor" never means "wages". "Honor" is an expression of appreciation for the individual's personal worth to those around them.

The selfless love of God, shed abroad in our hearts, expresses itself through giving of one's self, and one's resources, to those who are in need.

**God's selfless love expresses itself in giving the gift of God's servants to others, so those who give can share in the ministry of spreading the Gospel.**

Philippians 4:10-17 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Nevertheless, you have done well to share in my affliction. You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the Gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

The world gives to get in return. God's selfless love gives without expecting anything in return. God's selfless love in the hearts of Believers gives to others. This is the dynamic difference between how the world operates, and the selfless love of God operates in the hearts of Believers.

In the world, we look out for our own self-interest. It is cyclical. We labor to be paid by those we provide the service for. Those who receive a service from us pay us for our labors. The laborer works for the one who receives the benefit from the labor. This is NOT how it is in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not self-serving, but selfless.

We see this in the example of Philippians 4. The Apostle Paul labored to spread the Gospel. Paul never extracted a wage from those he ministered to. Paul ALWAYS preached the Gospel free of charge as the signature distinguishing himself from all of those who preached God's Word as a means of gain.

"...10 As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting." (2 Corinthians 11:7-12)

Paul never preached the Gospel because he was being paid to preach the Gospel. That would be conformation to the world's system of giving to receive in return. Paul preached regardless of whether anyone partnered with him in spreading the Gospel, (1 Corinthians 9:15). When fellow Believers did partner with Paul, it wasn't because Paul asked for or wanted their money, (Philippians 4:17). But Paul rejoiced that his example of selfless service was imitated by the Churches. Their selflessness in helping spread the Gospel was being added to their heavenly account.

Serving selflessly breaks the world's cycle of giving to get in return. Paul preached expecting nothing in return. Churches partnered with Paul in ministry expecting nothing in return. People received the free gift of the Gospel of Jesus Christ without being asked to pay for it. In this way, both Paul and the Bodies of Believers gave selflessly of themselves and defied the world's system of giving to get. The world gives to get. The selfless love of God in our hearts gives without expecting personal gain in this life. As a result, selflessness builds up a treasure in heaven, which has eternal value with our Father.

## The Workman is Worthy of His Wage

Galatians 6:6 The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.

The selfless love of God in our hearts prompts us to share good things with those who share spiritual things with us. This is only possible if the one sharing spiritual things is sharing them. If someone is being paid to preach spiritual things, they have their reward already. There is no need to share physical things with them. Galatians 6:6 is only relevant if the one sharing spiritual things is seeking nothing in return.

If I share my lunch with you, I expect nothing in return, except maybe your gratitude. If I work for McDonalds, I expect you to pay for your lunch because my job depends on it. Sharing with others and working for wages are not the same.

2 Timothy 2:6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

What is God's harvest, souls or money? Is the hard-working farmer laboring for eternal souls or for a paycheck? If the laborer is serving God for a paycheck, then he should be the first to receive his earthly reward. If he is laboring for eternal souls, he should be the first to receive his reward being stored up in heaven.

The Apostle Paul lists reasons for not serving God for a paycheck:

1 Corinthians 9:12 So as not to hinder the spread of the Gospel.

9:15 Because Paul's boast is selfless service.

9:17 Because serving voluntarily, there is a reward.

9:17 Because if not voluntarily, it is a job.

9:18 Because the reward is to offer the Gospel without charge.

9:19 So that more souls can be won to Christ

1 Timothy 5:3, 9, 17, 6:1 Honor widows who are widows indeed...A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old...The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor...All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor...

Equating the Biblical term of "honor" with "wages", isn't sound Biblical doctrine. The term "honor" means to value a person for who they are. It also implies a responsibility to care for those individuals who are "valued". When someone is valued and cared for, that care can take the form of physical things like service, food, or financial resources, but it means so much more. Honoring a person requires a spiritual awareness of how to best take care of that individual, but "honor" is never reduced to the formula of wages for services rendered. "Honor" never means "wages". "Honor" is an expression of appreciation for the individual's personal worth to those around them. In the case of slaves, "honor" is what is due to the slave's master. Jesus said, the greatest among us is to be the slave of all, (Matthew 20:27).

Luke 22:25-27 And Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you MUST become like the least, and the leader like the slave. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves."

Who remembers Jesus' example of washing the disciple's feet at Passover? "Then He (Jesus) poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the apron with which He was girded." (John 13:5)

1 Peter 5:5 You younger men likewise, yield to the mature. Yet all of you yield to one another wearing the servant's apron of humility, for "God does battle against the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

In any household of Jesus' day, the job of washing feet belonged to the lowest of the household slaves. It wasn't a job people were proud to have. Jesus illustrated for us how to put on the servant's apron and serve one another. The greatest, Jesus, was humble slave of all. Anyone who wishes to be great in God's house will wear the servant's apron of humility and selfless service for their brothers and sisters.

When the Body of Christ makes disciples, what model or example is given for the disciples to imitate? Do we make disciples modeled after the one who reclines at the table, or of the one who serves? Jesus made disciples modeled after the One who serves.

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master." (Matthew 10:24) Do the disciples exalt themselves above the example set by the Teacher so they don't have to be slaves to all?

The workman truly is worthy of his wage. If a workman labors for a paycheck, a paycheck is what that workman is worthy of. If a workman labors as a slave to his fellow man, he is worthy of an eternal reward. A slave who seeks nothing in this life but the honor of serving God and His people, builds up his reward in heaven. The faithful servant who did not seek his own benefit will hear his master say, "Well done my good and faithful servant. Enter into my joy!" (Matthew 25:21)

Galatians 6:7-9 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

## **The Doctrine Of Selflessly Giving To Others Is Not A Foundation For Religious Employment**

It has always been the way of un-crucified human nature to corrupt what God has intended for our good. God made food and intended it for our survival, (Ecclesiastes 9:7). But un-crucified human nature turns that need into gluttony which is a humiliation, (Proverbs 28:7).

God created alcohol to make man's heart glad and his face to shine, (Psalm 104:14-15). But un-crucified human nature abuses God's purpose for alcohol and turns it into dissipation, (Luke 21:34).

God created the concept of wealth so a good man lays up an inheritance for his children's children, (Proverbs 13:22). But un-crucified human nature becomes the slave of covetousness, (1 Corinthians 5:11).

God created sex as the foundation for interdependence, relationship, society, the basis for marriage, and the survival of humanity, (Genesis 1:28). But un-crucified human nature turns sex into a destructive force, (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

In this same way, un-crucified human nature affects the Body of Christ. God intended for His people to function and be maintained as a symbiotic, interdependent, mutually-supporting, self-replicating, selfless, expression of His love. Instead, for the profit of some, at the expense of the rest, the Body of Christ is being maintained as a business opportunity. This isn't something new. The Apostles preached and taught against this even in their day.

Acts 20:29-30 "I know that after my departure burdensome, covetous men will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."

2 Peter 2:1-3 "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even disowning the One buying them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. Many will follow them out to destruction, because of whom the Way of the Truth will be badly spoken of. In covetousness molding words and using you for their gain, to whom the judgment of old is not idle and the destruction of them is not asleep."

2 Corinthians 2:17 For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:5 For we never came with flattering speech as you know, nor with a veil covering covetousness - God is witness -

2 Corinthians 12:13-15 For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong! Here for this third time I am

ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?

2 Corinthians 12:16-18 But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit. Certainly I have NOT taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I? I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?

Most employees of the religious industry teach the doctrine that the Apostle Paul was an anomaly in his refusal to be a burden to those he ministered to. But Paul repeatedly calls on the whole Body of Christ to follow his example even as he imitates Jesus. In this last passage we see that Paul expected everyone taught by his doctrine of selfless service to also be selfless and not burden the Body of Christ. This New Testament doctrine of selfless service was expected to be imitated by every servant of God. It is the proof of sincerity, (2 Corinthians 2:17, page 17).

"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not being shepherd of his own sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters. The hired hand is fleeing because he is a hired hand and takes care of himself before the sheep." John 10:11-13

Merriam Webster's Dictionary settles the argument, ends the excuses, and nullifies the rationalization, of who of a hireling is. To even be considered a hireling, one has to be getting paid a wage. Without receiving remuneration for labor, there is no status of being a hireling. Conversely, anyone who does receive an earthly wage IS a hireling. Paycheck = hireling. Voluntary for free = not a hireling.

hireling

: a person who serves under condition of being paid

: a person who is paid for doing a job that is not respected or that is considered morally wrong

This brings us to the qualifications set in Scripture for those who would serve the Body of Christ. Elders are to be elected from within the Body of Christ to serve their local Bodies. This follows our Biblical examples. Scripture gives us examples of electing servants as the way it is to be handled in the Body of Christ. The following events are our Scriptural precedent for how servants are selected from among the Body and elected to serve the Body of Christ.

Acts 1:15-26 Replacement Apostle elected to replace Judas.

Acts 6:2-6 Deacons elected to serve the Body of Christ.

Acts 15:22 Special envoys elected to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.

2 Corinthians 8:18-19 Brothers elected by the Churches to a gracious work.

Acts 14:23 Elders elected in every city.

In the last two verses listed, the root of the Greek word "cheirotoneo" is used, which means, "voting by stretching out of the hand". In these examples from Scripture, we see the pattern established for selecting God's servants. First, an Apostle lists the qualifications for someone to be considered for the position. Second, candidates are put forward from the congregation. Third, a vote is taken. Fourth, everyone prays and the individual/s enter into their ministry, (if they aren't already doing it).

This is relevant because God has an intelligent design for the form and function of the Body of Christ. It is written in His Word and profitable for correcting error within the Body, (2 Timothy 3:16). Every aspect of God's design for the Body works against the selfishness of un-crucified human nature. God designed a screening process for considering those who would minister to the Congregation of God. Qualifications must be met for consideration. For elders and deacons who will serve the local Bodies, those are laid out in 1 Timothy and Titus. One of the qualifications to serve is; they can't be in it for the money.

In 1 Timothy 3:3, there are two different Greek words used to define qualities in a person. The first term disqualifies them from service because of financial motivations; aischrokerdes: eager for dishonorable gain. The second term is a must for being considered; aphilarguron: not wanting money. If anyone wants to serve as an elder in the Body of Christ, being motivated by personal gain disqualifies them.

In Titus 1:7, the elder must not be aischrokerdes: eager for dishonorable gain. The only times in the Bible when the desire for personal gain is called filthy lucre, sordid gain, or dishonorable gain, is when it is in reference to individuals serving God for personal gain, (1 Timothy 3:3, 8, Titus 1:7, 1 Peter 5:2).

The religious doctrine of vocational ministry, (serving God for a paycheck), is never found in the Bible. Conversely, Scripture teaches us that if a man's motivation for serving God is to receive a paycheck, it is dishonorable and disqualifies them from service.

To this, many Christians reply, "Shouldn't a person get paid for the work they do?" Of course. But serving God isn't supposed to be a job, it is supposed to be a relationship. God never intended for the Body of Christ to be maintained as a business with employees. God intended for the Body of Christ to be ministered to by multiple elders sharing the responsibility of ministry among them. In this way, they each can work for a living and serve God's people without being a burden to them.

Because we are brainwashed to believe the Body of Christ is a business, we find this notion absurd. What is absurd is all of the volunteers required to keep local church businesses running. Volunteers never expect to be paid. Without volunteers, church business couldn't function. But God never intended for the Body of Christ to be run as a business with employees. We are designed by God to be a Body full of individuals who selflessly and voluntarily serve one another in love.

There is no place in Scripture outlining how a pastor as an employee is to serve and control a congregation of saints and manage the cash-flow of the business. There aren't Scriptures on how this is to be done by elders either. God's people are not to be a business, (John 2:16). By contrast, there are many Scriptures explaining how elders are to voluntarily serve the congregations, bringing them into maturity and making disciples in the selfless image of Christ. Scripture does not support vocational ministry.

## **Kicking Against the Goads**

Not many understand Biblical references to muzzling oxen and kicking against the goads because we are not a primitive agrarian society. But these references were clear in Bible times as a daily part of the culture. The Apostle Paul mentions muzzled oxen several times, as he does kicking against the goads. It is important we look into and understand what the Apostle Paul was talking about.

Treading out grain is the practice of having oxen walk through a layer of harvested wheat stocks in a circle. At the beginning, the heads of wheat grains are clinging to the stocks. As the oxen trudge through the piled stocks, their movement knocks the wheat grains off the stocks. At the end, the trampled stocks, called chaff, are blown away with fans leaving the kernels of wheat grain laying on the floor.

Many primitive cultures still muzzle the oxen so they don't stop and eat the grain they are supposed to be treading out. With a muzzle on, the oxen can't eat, so they dejectedly trudge around in circles. But God gave Israel the command to not muzzle the oxen as an illustration for His people.

Without a muzzle the oxen stop and eat the grain unless someone follows them with a tool called a goad, prod, or prick. The goad is a long stick with a pointed end for poking the oxen. It hurts! Because it hurts, oxen kick at the person following them with the goad. But, the goad is long so the person following them doesn't get kicked. They just keep goading. As long as the person pokes the oxen with the goad, the oxen will tread out the grain, bending their necks periodically as they trudge to lick up some grain with their tongues. But, if they are not goaded, they stop and eat the grain and do no work.

Being compared to an un-muzzled ox is not a compliment.

Interestingly enough, when Jesus appeared to the Pharisee Saul, (before he became the Apostle Paul), striking him blind, Jesus said to Saul, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (Acts 26:14) Saul was a religious leader, not a Levitical Priest, who made his living from Israel's need for covering sins in the temple with the blood of animals. God had made provision for the Levitical Priests in His intelligent design for the system of animal sacrifice. The Levites shared in the alter. But the Sadducees and the Pharisees were not part of God's intelligent design. There was no provision made for them. So, they made it for themselves.

By the time Jesus was born, the Levites were no longer the spiritual servants of the people, but servants of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was run by the religious class of men called the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Neither group of men had to be from the tribe of Levi, though some were. But, they made their living from their vendors in the temple.

The temple treasury had been taken over and used as a central bank with usury and money changing as a way for the religious leaders to profit from the people. The religious leaders had set up vendors in the temple to change common coins into temple coins at a profit, so the people could make offerings in the temple. The Levitical Priests were instructed to reject the animal sacrifices brought by the people as being "blemished" or "imperfect". When the people couldn't offer their own animals, they had to buy

animals from the religious leaders' vendors, which profited the religious class at the expense of God's people.

This displeased God. On the first Passover of Jesus' Messianic Ministry, Jesus made a whip and cleared the vendors from the temple. He cried out, "Take these things away; don't be making My Father's house a business!" (John 2:16) The religious leaders did not repent, but brought the vendors back into the temple and continued doing business.

On the last Passover of Jesus' Messianic Ministry, Jesus did the same thing and drove the vendors out of the temple. But, because the religious leaders did not repent, Jesus pronounced God's judgement upon them. Not only did Jesus pronounce God's judgement on the religious leaders, but He did it in a way they were sure to understand. Jesus used God's words of judgement given to the prophet Jeremiah to pronounce against the religious rulers of Israel in Jerimiah's day, (Jerimiah 7:11).

On this last Passover before His crucifixion, Jesus drove the vendors out again crying out, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a robbers den!"

The Sadducees and Pharisees understood the judgement Jesus made against them and had Jesus murdered within days! But God's judgement against them stood and the center of their idolatry,(the temple), was utterly destroyed within 70 years. As a rich, young, ambitious, up-and-coming Pharisee, Saul profited personally from this temple racket. As a member of the religious ruling class, Saul's livelihood was tied to the temple vendors and in his standing as a member of the religious class.

Saul profited from the status quo that was threatened by the followers of the risen Jesus. With gusto and ambition, Saul persecuted the "Sect of the Nazarene" to destroy it. So it was that the Pharisee Saul was on the road to Damascus to persecute the Body of Christ. Jesus stopped him dead in his tracks as said, "... It is hard for you to kick against the goads." Jesus' words cut right to the heart of Saul's ambition, selfishness, and pride. It was a revelation that would shape the Apostle Paul's ministry and make his labors more productive than any others. Paul, more clearly and any of the other Apostles, would preach and teach the selfless doctrine of service in imitation of Christ.

## **Conclusion:**

God's intelligent design for the Body of Christ isn't for us to be maintained as a business opportunity for some at the expense of the rest.

God has always intended for the Body of Christ to be maintained as a symbiotic, nurturing, self-replicating, growing, maturing, selfless Body of Believers who put others before themselves.

God's intelligent design for the Body of Christ, (as revealed in Scripture), actively works against the selfishness of un-crucified human nature.

God's love is selfless. When fallen human nature is crucified, God's selfless love shed abroad in our hearts, expresses itself in selflessness.

To make disciples in the image of Christ, God's servants must model selflessness as the example for disciples to follow.