

LEAD! C.8 Submission and Service

In Which We Triumph By Surrendering

[Submission](#) is the key to understanding and exercising divine authority. Not merely submitting to God, but also to other humans -- even those we might be tempted to count our inferiors -- in order to serve them.

Crucially, our service must **not** spring from [codependency](#) or a need to be liked, but from a single-minded devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ, who made Himself a servant for our sake.

For only if we serve as Jesus served can we triumph as He triumphs.

Memory Verse: *"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake."* -- [2 Corinthians 4:5](#) (NKJV)

Assigned Reading

1. [Richard Foster: *Celebration of Discipline*](#)
 - 8. Submission
 - 9. Service
2. [Donald Whitney: *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*](#)
 - 7. Serving
3. [Eugene Peterson: *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*](#)
 - 5. Service: "Like Servants . . . We're Watching & Waiting"
 - 15. Community: "Like Costly Anointing Oil Flowing Down Head & Beard"
4. [Ruth Haley Barton: *Sacred Rhythms*](#)
 - N/A

Anecdote

Read [Luke 7](#). What happens when people submit to the authority of Jesus?

Bible

[2 Corinthians 4](#)

Serving isn't easy. If we only do it out of our human strength, we will ultimately lose heart -- which is why it is essential to continually experience God's mercy:

[4:1](#) Therefore, since we have this [ministry](#), as we have received [mercy](#), we do not lose heart.

[C.1] That includes living our lives transparently before God and man:

[2](#) But we have renounced the hidden things of [shame](#), not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by [manifestation](#) of the [truth](#) commending ourselves to every man's [conscience](#) in the sight of God.

Despite our best efforts, though, there are some who will never see our true purpose:

³ But even if our [gospel](#) is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the [light](#) of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the [image](#) of God, should shine on them.

For we do not serve to draw attention to ourselves, but to Christ our Lord:

⁵ For we do not [preach](#) ourselves, but Christ Jesus the [Lord](#), and ourselves your [bondservants](#) for Jesus' sake.

[C.2]

Since God Himself is the only light we can bring to this dark world...

⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the [knowledge](#) of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

... and we are merely the carriers:

⁷ But we have this [treasure](#) in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the [power](#) may be of God and not of us.

Yet for reasons we don't always understand, just being a messenger can be dangerous work:

⁸ [We are] [hard-pressed](#) on every side, yet not [crushed](#); [we are] [perplexed](#), but not in [despair](#); ⁹ [persecuted](#), but not [forsaken](#); [struck down](#), but not [destroyed](#)--

This is both sobering and encouraging. The contrast is between:

- hard-pressed vs. crushed
- perplexity vs. despair
- persecuted vs. forsaken
- struck down vs. destroyed

In other words, we are "beat up" but not completely "beaten". Though we may suffer greatly, we have not been -- and will not be! -- defeated. [C.3]

It may seem that we've reached the end of our lives, but that only means we are at the beginning of His:

¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the [dying](#) of the Lord Jesus, that the [life](#) of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.

This is the true servant: one who embraces death to bring life to another (cf. [John 15:13](#)) -- even those we don't think deserve it (cf. [Romans 5:7-8](#)). [C.4]

Such sacrifice requires great faith. Not in human nature, but in the power of God:

13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present [us] with you.

Since need to love people, yet not expect to get credit for it:

15 For all things [are] for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

For when we let go of external things out of love for *others*, God's grace is unleashed to transform *us* from the inside out:

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward [man] is being renewed day by day.

[C.5]

As we grow in the grace and discipline of serving -- and the ability to focus on the power and glory of God -- the cost feels smaller, and the payoff greater:

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding [and] eternal weight of glory,

Because our vision has shifted from earth to heaven (cf. [2 Kings 6:17](#)):

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen [are] temporary, but the things which are not seen [are] eternal.

Only when we surrender the visible idols of material status and physical power can we receive the heavenly crown of eternal life, which awaits all those who serve and submit in the name of Jesus.

Conversation

1. When have you or someone you love "lost heart", even briefly? Why?
2. Whom have you seen model being a "bondservant for Jesus' sake"?

3. How do you respond when you feel hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted, or crushed?
4. Which people are the hardest for you to serve and submit to?
5. What does it look like to be "renewed inwardly" even while "perishing outwardly"?

Decision

- **Repentance:** Where do you need embrace Christ's suffering and death in order to manifest His servant spirit?
- **Action:** How can you shine "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" this week?
- **Worship:** What are some "unseen and eternal" things you can thank God for?

Explore More

- [Servant – International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Paul's Servant Ministry :: Grace to You](#)
- [Boundaries and Codependency](#)
- [Do You Have a Servant's Heart?](#)
- [LEAD! B.7 From Envy to Submission « Radically Happy](#)
- [YouTube – I Am A Servant](#)

For Next Week

For next week, read [James 5](#). Why must we deal with sin?

Memory Verse: *"Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins."* -- [James 5:20](#) (NKJV)

References

1. **Blue Letter Bible.** "[2 Corinthians 4](#) – New King James Version." Blue Letter Bible. 1996–2009. 27 Mar 2009. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?t=NKJV&b=2Cr&c=4> >
2. **[New King James Version](#)** (NKJV) Copyright © 1982 by [Thomas Nelson, Inc.](#)

