

## Not my own – saved to serve

In this final lesson of 'First Steps' we are going to look at our calling, as those who have received God's saving grace, to share His goodness with others.

As you have worked through these steps of discipleship you have learned some basic truths concerning God's nature, the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross and how He empowers us through the working of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts and lives. We have looked at the importance of the Bible, God's enduring Word, and the need for prayer and fellowship in our walk of faith. Our eyes have been opened to the truth that Israel is a special nation, chosen by God to display His power, faithfulness and eternal purposes to the world. We have learned that, since God owns His creation and is so generous towards us, we have a responsibility to give joyfully to Him out of our finances. We have come to understand that God has a unique purpose for our life and in this study we will seek to discover some of the ways in which this can be outworked in the world around us, and amongst the people to whom God sends us.

### You are not your own!

Let's first of all take a look at some verses in **1 Corinthians 6:**

***"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who lives within you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, You were bought with a price (purchased with a preciousness and paid for, made His own). So then, honour God and bring glory to Him in your body."*** V.19,20 - Amplified.

Although these verses follow on from a passage warning of the sin of sexual morality, the truth that we have been 'bought with a price' (ie. the Blood of Jesus) applies to every area of our life. If you go to the shop and purchase something that you consider precious, at great cost, that object becomes one of your prized possessions. You will enjoy it, treasure it and look after it with great care. It is yours and anyone seeking to take it from you is called a thief. (This is one of the names given to the devil – **John 10:1**) God treasures you!

### True disciples

When Jesus called some of His twelve disciples they were busy in their everyday work – fishermen by trade.

**Read Matt. 14:18-22**

*How did both sets of brothers respond to Jesus' call?*

*Who did James and John need to leave?*

*What would their work with Jesus be?*

From this account we shouldn't suppose that Jesus calls all of us to leave our jobs! What He seeks is a willingness to follow Him wherever He leads and to be obedient to His call. In **Luke 14:33** Jesus says:

***"... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that He has cannot be My disciple."***

**Read Luke 14:25-33**

*Why do you think Jesus says that we should 'count the cost'?*

The disciples, though just ordinary imperfect men, went on to become those who would 'turn the world upside down' (**Acts 17:6**) with the message of the kingdom. They upset many religious people and idolaters by their uncompromising preaching, and as a result were imprisoned, tortured and some even died for their faith in Jesus. They were willing to suffer such things because their hearts were filled with a passionate love for God and a desire to fulfil the Commission Jesus had given them, whatever the cost.

### Sent to Serve

In **Matt. 10** we read how Jesus sent out the twelve disciples He had chosen to do His kingdom work. This was their mission and it foreshadowed the ongoing mission of the church which would extend to all peoples of the earth.

Read **Matt. 10: 5-10**

This was before His death and resurrection of course; now let's look at His final words to them just before He ascended into heaven:

Read **Mark 16: 15-18**

Now, through Jesus' redemptive work on the Cross, the full message of the gospel could go forth into **all the world!** We need to remember that we have a mission to fulfil in this world – out of our relationship of love with Father God and with Jesus our Saviour and Lord, can flow a life-giving river to others. This is the outworking of the Holy Spirit through us which Jesus promised in **John 7:38-39** –

***“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive ...***

As we walk in obedience to God and listen to the Holy Spirit's gentle promptings within, we will be able to share God's love and grace with others. Sometimes we will be called upon to speak out against sin, injustice and unrighteousness and we will need boldness to be uncompromising, but as we stay 'in tune' with the Holy Spirit we will be able to speak out in love and with grace, just as Jesus did.

### How can I serve?

The gifts and callings of God in our lives are as varied as His creation! He knows exactly which type of service each one of us is suited to, and though we will need to overcome fear and lack of confidence many times, we will find that there is a certain role we can play or a job we can do, which is 'made to measure'. He knew when He formed us in our mother's womb the destiny He was planning for us:

**Eph. 2:10** says: ***“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”***

This should make you feel significant! The works we do in Jesus' Name will include the exercise of spiritual gifts as well as walking in what we often call 'creation gifts' from the Father. This is a study in itself, but if you wish to look up the Bible verses outlining these gifts you will find them in **1 Cor.12:1-11, Eph. 4:10-12, and Rom. 12: 6-8.**

### Begin just where you are

As you walk faithfully with the Lord you will begin to see these gifts emerge in your life, but the place to start is always to **serve** others in whatever needs to be done within your church fellowship, or with friends and family. We read in **Galatians 5:13** – ***“... through love serve one another.”***

Look what Jesus said in **Matt. 20: 26-28** – ***“ ... whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant. ... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”***

We can begin to serve with anything that needs doing, within our church family or in our neighbourhood. As we are willing to serve others in practical ways or through sharing words of encouragement and love, we will begin to discover those gifts and strengths within our life which we know are freely given to us by God.

Some are called to leave secular jobs and work for God in 'full-time' service, but many of us will be just as effective serving Him and others whilst tending to our family's needs or working in the 'market place'.

Finally, let's bear in mind Paul's instruction in **Col. 3:17** – ***“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”***

