Share experiences of attempting to serve others “with” God in the past week.

REVIEW: God is perfect and complete and therefore cannot be served in any way. We were created perfectly and designed to serve with God. Sin distorted our ability to serve with God.

Most of us would like to think we are servant oriented people, but discover our pursuit of personal needs continually gets in the way. What do you think is God’s solution to our problem?

Matthew 6:25-33 (NIV)
25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

What is the essential message Jesus was communicating?
Jesus was declaring that God knows your every need and he is more than capable of taking care of them. To chase after your needs is a futile exercise and a waste of time if God has already provided for them.

Why is the statement “pagans run after all these things” so impacting a remark to us?
People who do not know God, or trust him, chase after having their needs met because there is no assurance they will be provided in any other way. They do not even trust the pagan gods will provide for them. They have a complete lack of faith in their gods to provide and are forced to rely solely on themselves.

When we chase after meeting our own needs, we declare that God is not faithful, God cannot provide or that God does not care. In so doing we denounce everything we claim to believe about God. We are no better than the pagans who do not know God.
What does it mean to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness”?  
To seek first his kingdom and righteousness is to make the purposes and character of God our life priority. We were created to represent God’s rule in this world, not our own agendas, and Jesus called us to return to that focus.

When we choose to embrace God’s purposes, he promises to free us from worrying about our needs in the process. This is the wonderful news of serving “with” God; he always makes provision for the journey.

When we move away from God’s purposes, and away from serving with him, we find ourselves on our own and as a result, in need. God never created a plan for our provision apart from him and his kingdom purposes.

Serving with Jesus is the means by which he meets our needs.

When our needs are met we are free to serve with Jesus.

So when should we focus on serving? Do we wait until God meets our needs and then move forward focussing on the kingdom or do we step out in faith simply trusting he will meet our needs?

Have you had experiences when you weren’t sure if you should step out in faith and serve the kingdom and risk having your needs not met vs. making sure your needs were met first?

Jesus is calling us to rethink our lives and get back to the original intent of serving as kingdom rulers in this world, representing God’s purposes and character. We are not to get distracted by lesser things that give us an illusion of comfort or control.

Matthew 20:20-24 (NIV)

20 Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.
21 “What is it you want?” he asked. She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.” 22 “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” “We can,” they answered.
23 Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”
24 When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.
Why did all the disciples desire to be part of Jesus’ team in the first place?
The disciples believed that Jesus was the prophesied messiah who was to come and establish his eternal kingdom on earth. By being selected as part of his personal leadership team there could only be great reward for them as he established his kingdom. They would be the A-team of the new king!

As time progressed on, they started to realize that their understanding of the kingdom was quite different than Jesus’ perspective. Judas was completely unimpressed as he started to see this difference being lived out.

Why do you think the mother of James and John requested that her sons have the seats to the left and right of Jesus?
These seats were considered places of special honour and authority. To occupy these seats would place them in the highest position next only to Jesus himself. What loving mother wouldn’t want this for her children?

But also implied in this request was a sense that such positions conveyed greater importance and the role of being served by those under you. They perceived such positions would be ones of influence, control and comfort. This would be the ultimate position for which anyone could strive.

Why were the other disciples so upset with the James and John?
The other disciples were indignant because they also wanted those positions for themselves. James and John just tried to shortcut the process and jump in line ahead of them. And to use their dear old mother in the process…who could refuse? It reveals that all the disciples were operating on the same understanding about position and prestige within the kingdom, a perspective Jesus needed to change in his future leaders.

Have you ever tried to gain a promotion only to have others get upset with you because it threatened their chances? Or, did you get upset with someone when they jumped in line ahead of you for a position? Share your stories.

Why did Jesus ask if they could drink the cup he was going to drink? What did he mean?
Jesus was referring to his upcoming persecution and death. He was essentially saying leadership in the kingdom is not about being served, it’s about dying to self. He was asking if the disciples were willing to die in the process of serving others for the kingdom. This was in stark contrast to their motives of being in places of honour and privilege.

Incidentally, each of the disciples did end up being persecuted and put to death for their faith.
Matthew 20:25-28 (NIV)

25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Discuss what Jesus meant when he said the Gentile rulers “lord it” over people.

"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad man."


What do you think about the above quote? Is it true? Why or why not?

Why might position and power often be outlets for sin to flourish?

Obviously Jesus still understands the need for the role of the leader, but what differences does he see existing between a worldly leader and a Kingdom of God leader?

How might you see these differences worked out in practical ways?

In Jesus’ kingdom, what ultimately should be the motivation for assuming a leadership role?

Can you think of some examples of a leader who exhibit a servant’s heart? What makes that person stand out in your thoughts?
Why is serving such a high priority in God’s kingdom?

What do each of the following passages teach us about the significance of serving in God’s kingdom?

Matthew 20:28 (NIV)  
*just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Servant leadership is rooted in the nature of God.  
Servant leadership places others before ourselves, even to the point of death.  
Servant leadership puts life into proper perspective.

How does serving put life into proper perspective?  
We were created to serve, so serving restores us back to our intended purpose and focus. When we fail to serve we are living out a distorted perspective on life which hinders both the effectiveness and joy of our lives.

John 15:13 (NIV)  
*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*

Servant leadership is rooted in a deep love for God and people. It is the ultimate fulfilment of the two greatest commands.

1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)  
*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

Servant leadership is rooted in a confidence that God will meet all your needs.

John 15:8 (NIV)  
*This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

Servant leadership bears much fruit.  
What does it mean to bear fruit?
Colossians 2:9-10 (NIV)
9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

Servant leadership is rooted in a belief you are complete in Christ.
Servant leadership is ultimately Jesus’ leadership being expressed through our lives.
Servant leadership is extremely powerful to change lives.

The implications of this passage are difficult to fully conceive. We have been given the fullness of Christ/God in our lives which is over every power and authority. We are restored back to the image we were created to be with the complete power of God available to us as we represent God’s rule in this world. This means that our every need is met in Christ and we are freed to serve creation with authority and power.

How might this passage evoke a shift in our life focus?

Jesus was very clear about his life mission of serving others for the kingdom of God.
If our life was centred on serving others for the kingdom, how might it affect our weekly schedule?

How might it affect how we view our career?

Where do you want to have lasting impact for the kingdom of God? How will this benefit others?

If you truly focus on this goal, what changes may need to be made in your life? What lesser things may need to be stripped away?

God has a role for you to serve WITH him in his kingdom. Embrace it fully!
This week, pray about where God wants you to serve with him for the greatest kingdom impact.