



Caspari Center NEWS

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The Duty and Joy of Service

"Equipping His people
for works of service,
so that the body of
Messiah may be built up"
Ephesians 4:12



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Ages ago, when man lived mainly off agriculture and cattle-breeding, and slavery was legal, a religious teacher told his followers: "Suppose one of you has a slave plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the slave when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Will he thank the slave because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have only done our duty.'"

Today these words may sound repulsive. "We are unworthy slaves"? What kind of self-description is that? Thankfully, most slavery was abolished a long time ago, so this parable is largely irrelevant for people in the West. We are not slaves, but free men and women entitled to a life of dignity and respect. And whoever told the parable was, apparently, a merciless slave-owner with no heart for his workers—some pagan who'd never heard of the God who made man in his own image and set the Jewish slaves free. My Jesus would have nothing to do with this inhuman austerity.

Such a reaction is not improbable. But it was, of course, none other than Jesus himself who told this parable to his disciples (Luke 17:7–10)—the only Jesus there is to believe in, the Jesus who won't be divorced from the totality of his Word. So what are we to make of this parable? And why does it offend us?

Taken out of the biblical context, it does present us with a bossy and uncaring God. But instead of doing that injustice to Jesus, let us face our own context: democratic, hedonistic culture. We are all equal, so it's easy to think of our humble and loving Lord, who took upon himself human flesh, as equal to us, his creatures. We are entitled to have our needs met, and the Lord indeed is our Good Shepherd, so it's easy to think that he exists for us.

The parable might be a typical Eastern exaggeration, just as hating one's parents is presented as a condition for following Jesus (Luke 14:26). But the point is nonetheless clear: just as a slave is bought for a specific purpose, which is service, and nothing else, so we are created by God for a life of servanthood, not self-indulgence. We exist for him, not vice versa. Loving God and doing his will is, for a human being, what swimming is for a fish, and flying for a bird. And since our culture is all about give-and-take, we are

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easily tempted to think that service to God should be rewarded by him, like any other service. Yet Jesus is telling us just the opposite: our obedience is not a basis for laying a claim on God.

But doesn't Scripture speak of God rewarding his faithful servants? It sure does. However, there are two vital truths about these rewards. First, they are signs of God's pleasure that are given to assure us: "Well done, good and faithful servant." Second, they are, in essence, a promotion to a new level of responsibility: "You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things" (Matt. 25:23). Yes, the reward for faithfulness is not a higher pension, but more challenging service—because that's what we were made for!

But doesn't that give us a picture of a God who wants mere slaves? What about his love that reaches out in desire for fellowship and unity with us? Well, listen to Jesus once again: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34). Pay attention: not "full-time ministry," "overtime job," "duty," "responsibility," or "fate," but "food": that which gives our body new energy, strength, and life! Furthermore, a good meal is a meal shared with a friend—so food is also about the joy of fellowship. And since the Spirit of Jesus, whom we usually call the Holy Spirit, is in us, we can indeed, as the psalmist says, "serve the Lord with gladness" (Ps. 100:2). Thank you, Jesus, for this amazing privilege!

Alec Goldberg

Freedom in Service

Someone told me recently that if you don't know what to do next in life, find somewhere to serve. We are always called to serve God, to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," and to love our neighbor. And inevitably, we will be blessed in extraordinary abundance by he who called us to his work.

I came to Israel nearly two years ago to volunteer at the Caspari Center. I had spent seven weeks at Caspari the preceding summer, so I was already well aware that my tasks would hardly be glamorous or high-powered. My daily work ranged from website maintenance to budget planning, deep-cleaning the fridge, and fetching the mail. However, on more than one occasion, both Western Christians and local believers visiting our center would shake my hand, look me in the eye, and say, "Thank you for serving, thank you for giving your time to this ministry." I would promptly mumble something vague and incoherent and extract myself as soon as possible. Sure, I had given eighteen months to Caspari. And yes, I had

left my family, home country, and familiar surroundings. But I did not really accept that my volunteering was an act of service. So I asked myself why, and I discovered that my concept of "service" was based on a worldly perspective, not on God's.

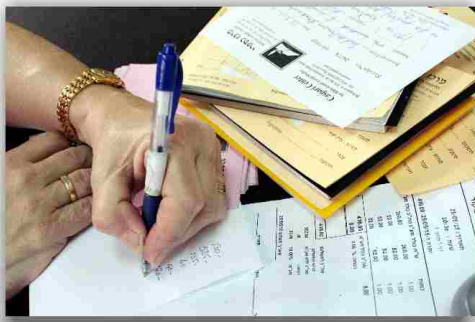
"Service," in my mind, came with connotations of sacrifice, duty, and even a hint of unwillingness. However, it was a sheer joy to come to work at Caspari every morning. We started each day with brothers and sisters reading the Word and encouraging each other in prayer, and then set out to work. As a volunteer, my tasks helped keep the office running, and it was rewarding and satisfying to see the fruit of that work. So rather than fitting into my preconceived notion of service, my time at Caspari was one of life and enjoyment. My concept of service started to change.

The Lord had surely called me to come and serve in Israel by working at Caspari. Rather than relating to God in this service as a bound slave, I came to find a freedom in acting out his calling for me. I have felt the joy of living in his land and growing in love for his people and his plans to bring the Jewish people home. I have been privileged to be in a Godly, encouraging environment where I have been able to personally learn from mature believers who have ministered to me. I have had the opportunity and space to deepen my understanding of Scripture.

So when God calls us for his purpose, it does not manifest as a duty or a chore. It feels right. God does not "use" us the way humans "use" each other. When we are his slaves, we are really free (1 Pet. 2:16). It is a true joy to be serving out what God has called me to do. Since I know that he can and will use me for his glory—that it has nothing to do with me—I know I can rest assured that he will bless me in service and turn slavery into true freedom in him.

Hannah Gyde





The Hands behind the Ministry

Daily Life through the Lens

Daily work routines are full of active hands. Most of our work happens behind the scenes, but working hands are easy to capture through the camera lens since they are everywhere. Those faithful hands clean our floors; serve food to board members; keep books in order, dusted, and categorized according to theological subject; prepare translation equipment before seminars for our Arabic-, English-, and Russian-speaking participants; set out chairs for open lecture attendees; pay all the gas, electricity, rent, water, tax, printing, and other bills; and deliver mail to our office here in Jerusalem.

And there is much more than a camera can capture, like our computer experts connecting broken wires, making backups, saving lost files, or installing new software after everyone else has left for the day. The ministry goes on, and all hands are needed every day.



But the most important activity for hands in our ministry is praying: hands carry our most urgent needs before God. And those beloved hands don't have to be here in Israel—they can be effective anywhere. Without prayer, even the most watertight plans would sink before they even start. How much invisible spiritual work is happening that no one ever knows about? Prayer and financial support are vital services that bring no glory to the hands themselves. It's a precious, but hidden work, the service of hands that sacrifice without even getting wet or dirty. And even though the work of our hands sometimes fails, everything is still in God's hand. What a blessing to have our hands in his!

Heidi Tohmola



media review ✂

Caspari Center publishes a weekly review of material from the Israeli press documenting attitudes toward Messianic Jews, the mission, and the Christian faith. To receive the Media Review free of charge by email, sign up at our website, www.caspari.com.

Magazine HaBanka'ut HaPratit, April 13, 2015

The village El Pueblo de los Israelitas, near the Urubamba River's exit from the Andes in southeastern Peru, is home to a group of native Peruvians who see themselves as "spiritual continuers of the people of Israel"—they keep the Shabbat, will not eat pork, and make a pilgrimage to their temple three times a year. Upon hearing that the writer and his group were from Israel, the locals corrected them and said, "You're not from Israel, you're from Palestine. God's presence left Israel because of the sins, and found its resting place in the Urubamba River."

God's Wonderful Plan

Have you ever been afraid you've made the wrong choice in life?

I was terrified I'd make the wrong decisions about my life when I was in my late teens and early twenties. Like many young adults, I was overwhelmed by the idea that my choices would have consequences that would shape the rest of my life. I felt spiritual pressure to make the right choices as well. After I came to faith in Jesus during my teens, I heard over and over again that God loved me and had a wonderful plan for my life.

Though I understood on an intellectual level that this truism was speaking of my Messiah as God's wonderful plan for my life, I couldn't help but wonder if serving God meant I needed to discover precisely what it was that he had in mind for me. Otherwise . . .

Well, I never got past the "otherwise." I meshed my own subtly perfectionist fear of getting "it" wrong (whatever that mystery "it" was) with the idea that there was a single, very specific set of plans I alone could execute for the glory of God. It was *Mission Impossible*, since I had no idea where those plans might be hidden among the questions I had about what I was supposed to do with my life.

Sometimes, we in the church use language that confuses rather than clarifies questions of relationship and vocation for young people launching into adulthood. "You are destined for greatness!" conference speakers proclaim over hungry young crowds. "God has called YOU to be a world changer!" well-meaning youth leaders exclaim to the teens in their charge. This sort of talk seems to feed off of Western celebrity culture, telling young people that they can become superstars for Jesus, rather than teaching the reality of what it means to follow him. Jesus said, "Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:38–39).

Losing our lives is the opposite of a superstar existence. When Jesus delivered a man so possessed by demons that the guy had to live among the tombs in the wilderness outside of his hometown, many may have thought it would be God's best for this man to go on the road with Jesus and tell his story. He would have been a great opening act, warming up the crowd with his testimony before Jesus taught around Galilee! Instead, Jesus sent him back home. Scripture doesn't even record his name. God's wonderful plan for this man was that he testify to his Savior by living his life as a whole, healed person among his own people.

Whether the Lord leads us to speak his name in the spotlight or to serve him in the shadows, whether he has a specific mission for us like traveling across the world to share the Good News or living for his glory in our hometowns, his wonderful plan for our lives is simply about losing our lives and finding his.

Michelle Van Loon

Prayer Requests

Please pray for . . .

- **Further improvement of the quality of our Shabbat school seminars**
- **New partners in ministry**
- **Development of a Messianic liturgy**



If you would like to know more about the Caspari Center and its activities, write to caspari@caspari.com or visit our website, www.caspari.com. You can support our work by prayer, volunteering, or financial gifts to help with individual projects or the general work of the center.