

Helping People Feel More than Welcome

4. More than welcome to join us in serving others

Recap and Intro

1. More than welcome as someone who matters to God – and us
2. More than welcome to join us in our life with Jesus
3. More than welcome to share stories with people who will listen
4. More than welcome to join us in serving others

We tend to gravitate towards people who are interested in us. As the saying goes: “People don’t care about how much you know until they know how much you care.”

We also gravitate towards people who are positive, enjoy being together, looking out for each other, and making a positive difference in this world. Where might we encounter this in our 21st Century culture?

How might people sense or experience this more fully among our Good Shepherd family?

Story of the one-eared lopper...

“If you’re ever in Cowell, just go down the main street and ask for the one-eared-lopper – and I’ll buy you a beer!” **A small act of service can make a big difference.**

What brings more satisfaction?

- When you do something great that people notice; or when you help a person in need.
- When you boss someone around; or when you help someone who’s struggling.
- When you do better than others in a task; or when you help others do better in their task.

Consider Jesus

Jesus is the promised Messiah-King of Israel. And what sort of King is he? Jesus’ shows us what it looks like to live in the Kingdom of God – where God’s love moves us to serve others with joy.

What are some specific examples of how Jesus does this throughout the gospel accounts?

As Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem for that final Passover, he keeps telling his disciples: **“The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.** (Mark 9:31-32 NIV)

The next verses suggest that the disciples just don’t get it: **They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.**

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.” He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.” (Mark 9:33-37 NIV)

What does “greatness” look like in the kingdom of God?

Jesus tells us his purpose: **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** (Mark 10:45 NIV).

- What is a **ransom**?
- In what way were we held captive? And what was once our destiny?
- How did Jesus pay the price for our freedom?
- How can we be sure?

You are one of the **many** Jesus gave his life for. Jesus loves you so much he was prepared to die for you - rather than spend eternity without you.

Having paid the price to bring us into God’s family, we now join in the Father’s restoration plans for his world.

We are saved to serve

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God... For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Ephesians 2:8-10 NLT)

Why can’t we earn God’s salvation by doing good works?

How does God’s grace change us? What does it produce in us - and through us?

Safe and secure in Jesus, we don’t have to keep grasping after greatness in the eyes of the world. Instead, we are free from self-promotion to get on with **the good things God planned for us long ago**. We are saved to serve.

Jesus calls, equips and empowers disciples to share in his work

Jesus called a bunch of people to follow him. A disciple is a person who learns from Jesus so they can become more like Jesus. It’s not just doing what the Master does, but developing the Master’s character. Jesus’ model of training was more like an apprenticeship than an academic exercise.

- Jesus taught and modelled preaching, healing, deliverance.
- Jesus gave them his authority and sent them out in pairs to the same things.
- Jesus met up with them again to reflect and debrief.

In sending the Holy Spirit, Jesus empowers his disciples to share the Good News and love of Jesus with others. Faith is active in serving others.

Followers of Jesus are servants

What happens to church attenders who want to just consume religious goods and services?

What happens in the body of Christ when many of its members are not serving?

What happens to God’s restoration plans for his world when we want to be served, rather than serving?

Sometimes people think they need to learn more about Jesus **before** they can begin to serve. Yes, having an accurate understanding of who God is and what Jesus has done for us is important.

However, if information does not produce transformation, something is awry. If we are not following Jesus in serving others then our faith is phony. As James makes clear:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:14-17 NIV)

Words are cheap. If our confession is not backed up by action, then our faith is dead.

Unchurched Aussies have a pragmatic way of evaluating the claims of Christianity: "Don't tell me mate, show me! Show me the difference Jesus is making in your life by the way you respect people and respond to their needs." James mentions material needs. Yet in our culture, helplessness, hopelessness and loneliness can be just as soul-destroying as material poverty!

"Some Christians are about 300 Bible verses overweight."

Stepping out and serving will grow us spiritually far more than pious talk in "holy huddles". Through serving we discover the gifts God has given us - and can develop them. Through serving others with joy, people get to experience the love of Jesus.

What does this mean for us?

It means dying to our obsession with self, so we can respond to the hurts, needs, and concerns of others (cf Philippians 2:3-5).

The first arena of service is our family

Another arena of serving is our daily work

Another arena of serving is our church family and/or local community

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

God wants us to be faithful and fruitful with the gifts he has given us.

How are you using your God-given gifts to help others in your family, daily work, church family and/or local community?

Drawing others into the JOY of serving

Over recent weeks, we've emphasised the importance of fostering relationships and caring for people. Relationships help people feel a sense of connection and belonging. Providing opportunities for people to exercise their gifts and passions to make a positive difference in the lives of others can also be powerful in this.

What are the opportunities when a few people are working together to help others?

This can be transformative for those who are new to a community; and for those who find it hard to talk or share in a group setting (eg blokes).

Such faith active in love can also be a positive witness to the wider community. It's being salt and light – so that people will experience God's kindness and give him glory.

When people of various ages are working together to help/bless/serve others, both faith and skills can be passed to the next generations. Mentoring the next generations is the legacy that will outlast us!

Faith Active in Love – Acts

When the people of God are coming together to share their lives together in Christ, there is joy. When people are serving together, there is joy. And there is kingdom growth!

What is the evidence can you find of this in the following passages?

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 4:32-37

Acts 5:12-16

Acts 6:1-7

Acts 11:19-24

How can we invite or encourage others to share in this joy of what happens when we come together in worship, fellowship events, and service?

How can we more intentionally discover the gifts of others and invite them into various arenas of service that happen in and through our GSPV family?

When it comes to serving others, and drawing in others to share in that joy, Mother Theresa lived this out in a profound way. Here are a few quotes from her:¹

- Prayer in action is love, love in action is service.
- Love to be real, it must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self.
- It is a kingly act to assist the fallen.
- Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.
- I

¹ <http://www.verybestquotes.com/150-mother-teresa-quotes/>

- I see Jesus in every human being. I say to myself, this is hungry Jesus, I must feed him. This is sick Jesus. This one has leprosy or gangrene; I must wash him and tend to him. I serve because I love Jesus.
- Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you.
- It is easy to love the people far away. It is not always easy to love those close to us. It is easier to give a cup of rice to relieve hunger than to relieve the loneliness and pain of someone unloved in our own home. Bring love into your home for this is where our love for each other must start.
- I pray that you will understand the words of Jesus, “Love one another as I have loved you.” Ask yourself “How has he loved me? Do I really love others in the same way?” Unless this love is among us, we can kill ourselves with work and it will only be work, not love. Work without love is slavery.

Current opportunities to serve with people of Good Shepherd

- Working Bees to maintain and improve our site.
- Supporting Ingle Farm Family Hub – with donations of food and goods, as well as people helping out in some of the programs there.
- Supporting the work of Maranatha Health in Uganda.
- Building connections and supporting the ministry of Good Shepherd Primary School.
- Ladies’ Fellowship – Bible Study and fellowship. For decades they’ve been catering for funerals, weddings, conferences, raising money for mission projects overseas and locally.
- Small groups growing in Jesus and serving together.
- Thursday afternoon Social Group – connecting with people over games and conversations.
- Monday night Meet n’ Eat team and helpers who provide a free meal and a listening ear.
- Prayer and pastoral care supporting those who are struggling, sick, grieving or lonely.
- Practical help – with needs communicated via our web-site care link, or word of mouth.
- Friday morning Playgroup, Transform (confirmation).
- Worship greeters, ushers, those who set up and wash up for HC.
- Music team, tech team, visual arts team.
- Writing and/or performing short skits or dramas.
- Children’s folders + sharpening the pencils in our chairs

Some of us like to serve on our own; others like to be part of a team. Some of us like to work with things; others like to work with people. No matter how we serve, every act of service done in the name of Jesus is part of God’s work in his world.

Serving = Jesus’ love in action!

Through serving, we bless people and build relationships with them.

Through serving, Jesus is reaching out to bring more and more people into God’s story – so they too can have life to the full in Jesus – and inherit eternal life!