

# Relating to God Through Service

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[ 0 : 00 ] A day that a lot of churches recognize as Sanctity of Life Sunday.! A huge negative impact of that decision on unborn children and the violence that has been perpetuated against unborn children, especially since that day.

It's been a time to remember unborn children because even today, even after Roe v. Wade is no more, unborn children are still at risk in this country and really around the world.

I'm not going to spend this morning, mostly just because I'm not very good at planning for the future, but I'm looking at maybe next week addressing the topic and looking at it.

There's actually some things going on here in the state of Ohio that I want to make sure everybody's aware of as well when it comes to the topic of abortion violence. But anyway, I just wanted to mention that.

Today, we're actually going to continue and finish up with our series on building a relationship with God. When we first started this series, we talked about that phrase or saying that we've heard and many of us have used that Christianity is not just a religion, it's a relationship.

[ 1 : 46 ] Or maybe even a little bit more precise, Christianity is not just a religion, but it's a relationship. Many religions are only that, just religions, they're rituals.

They don't involve having a relationship of a personal nature with the living God. But Christianity is different in that we have the opportunity to build a personal relationship with God, to get to know Him as He gets to know us.

We've discussed different ways that we can relate to God. And we focus mostly on communication, right? Where we talked about the scriptures, where God communicates to us, and we can listen to Him by reading the scriptures that He's given to us.

And then last week, we talked about prayer, in which we communicate to God and express our needs, our desires, our life, we communicate to Him.

But here's my question this morning. Is communication the only way that we relate to God? Is it just through communication? Or are there other ways in which we relate to God?

[ 3 : 06 ] God, back in the early 90s, there was this guy, he was a Christian counselor, mostly marriage counselor. His name was Gary Chapman. And he noticed in his counseling that there were a lot of these couples that were kind of at odds, that didn't really feel loved from one another, even though he was hearing from each spouse that they were expressing love.

But that love wasn't, it wasn't landing, it wasn't being felt. And as he thought about this, he came up with this idea that he turned into a book called The Five Love Languages.

Anybody heard of that book? I see lots of hands going up. It became somewhat of a phenomenon, not just among Christians, but across the globe. People all over the world, Christians and non-Christians alike, it really resonated with a lot of people.

And the idea is, is that everybody has ways that they feel and express love, and sometimes people prefer their personality, whatever it is that makes them who they are.

They value one type or expression of love over others. It's not that any one expression of love is more important or less important than another one, but we're all different, right?

[ 4 : 26 ] And so we value things differently. So a husband who might be trying to express his love to his wife through his service, by fixing the leaky faucet or washing his wife's car, even though that is an expression of love, to her, she really values words of affirmation when he says something loving and kind to her.

And so if he only does the one thing but doesn't do the other, you know, there is some expression of love there that is felt, but it doesn't really fill up the love tank.

And that was kind of a big part of Gary Chapman's book is everybody has this love tank, right, that needs to be filled up. And there are certain ways of expressing love that fill up that love tank better than others.

All right, I'm going to ask you to help me out. Who can help me out with the five different love languages? What are they? Touch. Okay, physical touch. That's one of them. Physical touch.

Like a hug or a cuddling with your spouse. What's another one? Sorry. Coming to get, sorry. Gifts.

[ 5 : 41 ] Gifts. Okay, gifts. What was the other one, Lynette? Time together. Quality time, I think, is exactly what he called it. Quality time. So those are three. Touch. Gifts.

Giving gifts. Quality time. Acts of service. Acts of service. And then there's one more. Words of affirmation. Which I guess I said earlier. And so those are the five that he identified.

Like I said, all of these are meaningful. But because of our personalities and the uniqueness to each one of us, we feel more loved with one or more of these ways than others.

And these are all ways in which we express love. And by expressing love, build relationships with one another. And by the way, even though Gary Chapman was focused on couples, does the love languages only apply to married couples?

Or couples that are, you know, romantic couples? No, not at all. Right? This is something that you can teach siblings on how to love one another, to express love in ways that are received well.

[ 6 : 56 ] This is something you can use with your friends or even at work with coworkers. You can learn how to best express love to others. What about God?

Is this something that we can use as a paradigm in how we express our love for God? You know, there's, I think, a reason why we show and receive love in these five different ways that Gary Chapman has identified.

It's because that's the way that God created us. And he created us that way, but did he create us that way in just completely randomly?

What does the Bible say about how God created us? The Bible says that he created us in his image and in his likeness. God created us to be like him.

Now, not in every way. We're not like God in every way. We are not eternal without beginning like God is. We are not almighty like God is. But we are like God in many, many ways.

[ 8 : 10 ] And I think, as I read through the Bible, the scriptures, that this is one of the ways in which we are like him. And he created us to be like him in the ways that we can build a relationship with him, not just among humans, but even building a relationship with God through these different ways.

And so I think that these love languages apply not just to our relationships with one another, but also to our relationship with God.

Both in the ways that God loves us. Does God give us words of affirmation? Yeah, you open up the scriptures.

There's lots of words of affirmation. And then, can we express our love to the Lord with words of affirmation? Absolutely.

You know, maybe someday, you know, we get to heaven and we'll talk to the Lord. And he'll actually be talking to Gary Chapman. And he'll tell Gary Chapman, you know what, actually there were six love languages. You missed one.

[ 9 : 23 ] That's possibly the case. You know, we're just trying to, you know, think through these things. And I think Gary probably did a pretty good job, but maybe we'll find out that things were not exactly quite how we tried to figure them out.

But regardless, I think at least with a few of these, Gary was on to something. I think we can show that from the Bible. And what we're going to look at today, we've looked at words of affirmation because we were looking at communication the last few weeks.

Today, we're going to look at that love language that we call acts of service. And how we can love the Lord and how he loves us through service.

And like with basically everything, God is the one who shows us the way. He leads the way. The scripture tells us this, that we love God.

Why? Because he first loved us. He shows us how to love. And so let's look at God's love through service towards us.

[ 10 : 33 ] Would you open up your Bible to the book of Mark? Mark chapter 10. Mark chapter 10 and verse 42. You know, if I asked you to describe God, what words might you use?

We just looked at a few of them. Almighty, right? God is almighty. He has all power. The Bible says that God is holy. God is the creator of all things.

He is the king, the supreme ruler. Not just of earth, but of the whole universe. He is the judge, the Bible says. And all of those things are certainly true.

But Jesus here in Mark 10 speaks to another word used to describe himself. Not one typically that other religions would use of their God, by the way.

But he overheard his disciples talking. And they were talking about who was the greatest or would be the greatest in the coming kingdom in which Jesus would establish his throne on the earth.

[ 11 : 44 ] Which, by the way, is still coming. That's something still to come. But they were saying, well, who's going to be the greatest in this kingdom? And Jesus was a bit perturbed by this.

And this is what he said to them. Mark 10, verse 42. But Jesus called them to himself and said to them, You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them.

And their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you. But whoever desires to become greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

Now, I'd like for us to just take a moment to let that sink in. I mean, for many of us, this is just basic Christianity. Jesus came to serve us, to give his life to us as a ransom for many.

[12:47] But just remember, this is the one who created the universe, who stretched out the heavens, who calls every star by name. The ones who holds the universe together by the word of his power.

He's the one who came to serve his creation. As Roger said this morning, what's that passage? Who am I, O Lord, that you would think of us?

That you would give heed to us? But God did that. He came not to be served. Jesus came to serve us.

And not, by the way, with just one act of service. A lot of times we think about the cross, right? Jesus came. He died on the cross for our sins. He gave his life, as he says here, as a ransom for many.

And by the way, many means the entire world for all men. But remember that time when Jesus was in that upper room and he asked his disciples.

[13:58] He says, I want you to come here because I'm going to serve you. I'm going to wash your dirty feet. And they were shocked, right? He's the master. He's the Lord. He's the rabbi.

We should be washing your feet. But he said, I want to show you something. I want to teach you something. I want to teach you to be a servant. And showing you in a very visceral way how to serve others.

You know, the Bible says that Jesus right now from the heavens is serving us. Did you know that? Right now in Hebrews, it tells us that he ever lives to make intercession for us as our high priest.

As our high priest, Jesus is making intercession, praying for us. Right now. He's serving us in that way. Also, he's serving us in looking forward to our future.

Jesus told his own disciples. He said, hey, you know what? I'm leaving. I'm going to go up to heaven to be with the Father. But I'm going to be at work, he said.

[15:07] I go to prepare a place for you. Jesus is going to prepare a place in the heavens for his people.

Preparing us a home. And so God, and specifically here we're talking about Jesus Christ, God the Son, ever lives to serve us.

He's done so many things already and he continues to serve us. But when we think about a healthy relationship, right? Is a healthy relationship one in which the one person serves the other and the other person does nothing?

Is that a healthy relationship? No, not at all. Open up your Bibles to Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12. In human relationships, if one person does all the serving and the other person only receives the service, that's not a healthy relationship.

In fact, some people might call that exploitation depending on the context. It's the same way with the Lord. God took the initiative.

[16:32] He didn't have to. And it's kind of backwards, isn't it? For the one with the higher authority to take the initiative to serve. Most of what our life experience is, is that the one with less authority should be serving the one with more.

But God took the initiative, even though he is the highest authority of all, took the initiative to serve us. He initiated by loving us first, by serving us.

In fact, by becoming the greatest servant of all. Romans 12, Paul has spent 11 chapters sharing what God has done for us.

And in Romans 12 here, there's this word. I'm going to read this, but we're going to focus on one word. He says this, I beseech you, therefore. He just finished with a whole litany of things that God has done for us.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, because of God's mercy towards us, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

[17:45] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Therefore, because of what God has done for us, because of his incredible service and love towards us, we have a reasonable service that we can return back to the Lord.

And that makes for a very healthy relationship. I want you to stay there in Romans, but I want to take a look at what the Bible teaches about how we ought to serve the Lord, about how we ought to serve him.

The first thing I want to look at is our motivation. You might ask the question, well, why does motivation matter when it comes to service, right?

You know, when you're trying to get something done, it just kind of matters whether something gets done. Service is service, right? Why does the motivation behind all of it matter?

[19:00] But if the purpose in our service is to build a relationship, then motivation is actually paramount. Why we do the things that we do.

I want to consider a few relationships that you might find in the world. Ones that are specifically described in the Bible. One is a master-slave relationship.

You know, we don't see a lot of that today. Maybe in other parts of the world, but not here where we live. But most of the history of the world, this was a common thing. A master who would buy a slave, and that slave, they had an obligation to work for their master.

They were owned by him. And if they did not serve, there was some kind of punishment, typically, they would come to bear.

Some way to get them to do the things that they were required to do. As part of their service. So in that kind of a relationship, punishment, or the fear of punishment, would compel them to serve their master.

[20:12] And that is a type of relationship. Is that the kind of relationship that many of us yearn for? No. But it is a type of relationship. Another one, which is more common in our culture, and has been throughout the world, is an employer-employee relationship.

In which you hire someone, and they work for you, or you're hired by someone, and you work for them. And at the end of the week, or the end of the month, or whatever the pay period is, you get a paycheck for the hours that you work, for the value that you added.

And so as you work for that person, you are compelled by that paycheck. The reward compels you to serve your employer.

But there's a third way, a third type of relationship. One that has what the Bible describes as more of a grace dynamic.

In which punishment is not part of the equation. A reward is not really part of the equation. But the only thing left, if there's no punishment, or fear of punishment, to compel someone, there's no reward to compel what is left.

[21:39] Well here's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5.14. He says this, For the love of Christ compels us.

The only thing that's left is love. He says, to continue that verse, Because we judge that if one died for all, then all died.

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer, should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them, and rose again.

So we have a different way of living, because of what Jesus did for us. The relationships that we have, should be motivated not by fear, not by reward, but by something else.

By love. It's the kind of love that God demonstrated toward us. For the parents out there, I think many of us have had this experience.

[ 22:38 ] You know, as parents, we try to teach our children to be diligent in their work, to actually serve the household, to do their chores, whether it's a daily chore, or sometimes just, hey, I need you to go cut the firewood today.

And a lot of times, we have to ask them for every little thing, right? You got to stay on top to make sure that they do the things that you need them to do. But there comes this beautiful moment that I think many of us parents have experienced, in which there's a child at whatever age it is, that does something to serve the family, and no one asks them to do it.

And it just makes your heart rejoice when you see that. They do something to serve the family because they saw a need that needed to be done, and they just did it.

Maybe it was washing the dishes just because they were there. It wasn't something that was assigned to them. They just saw something that needed to be done, and they did it. Or maybe it's an older sibling seeing that a younger sibling is struggling with schoolwork, and sits down and helps them to do it.

Or maybe even a younger person sees mom needs help with the baby and offers, hey mom, I can watch the baby while you go take a nap. Wow, that's incredible.

[ 24:04 ] And it's quite a contrast, right, from what usually happens where all the service is part of a schedule, is something that is asked or required.

And this is a part of growing up, of maturing, of growing in love, and growing in our relationships with one another. Our children are becoming invested in the family, and those relationships are blossoming, they're blooming.

Motivation matters, doesn't it? You've asked them to do that one thing a hundred times, and they've done it a hundred times.

But this time, they did it from their own free will, because they saw a need, and wanted to express their service, and love, and completing that task.

It wasn't because, you know, their allowance was at stake. It wasn't because there was some kind of punishment or trouble they'd get into. They weren't even trying to earn their place in the family.

[ 25:16 ] I've got to earn my spot. No, they already have their place in the family. They simply did it, because love compelled them. And by the way, love for who?

Well, if they're helping their sibling with their homework, it's love for their sibling. But who else is that helping, by the way? Well, it's helping mom and dad, right? Because mom and dad have a vision for the household.

They want the best. They want what is good for everyone. And so that's why we assign tasks and chores and different ways to serve one another. That's the way that it is with the Lord.

God has all kinds of things all kinds of ways that he wants to serve the body of Christ. He wants to serve really the world. And he wants to see us do those same types of things where we take the initiative, find needs that need to be done, and do them, because that's what the Lord would have us, because we are fulfilling the vision that God has for the world.

Let's look at some specific ways that, what it means to serve the Lord. Back to Romans 12, if we look at that verse again, you know, when we think about serving God, a lot of times we think about church activities, right?

[ 26:47 ] Church is the place where you serve God. So we think about teaching a Sunday school class, or teaching the kids class, or going on a mission trip, maybe, singing up on the stage with the music team.

Those are all ways to serve God, and those are certainly ways that we can serve the Lord. But the Bible speaks to something much broader than that in how we serve him.

Going back to Romans 12, it says this, I'm saying here, listen, we have these bodies, these earthly bodies that God has given us.

what we can do to serve God is to lay down our lives, our physical bodies, use them to serve God in many different ways.

Not just on Sunday morning, by the way. We don't just serve God during our devotional time in the morning or in the evening. But actually, every moment of every day.

[ 28:11 ] You know, when you are at work and you choose honesty and integrity with your employer, when there's an opportunity for you to maybe cut a corner or cheat your employer in some way, you choose to do what is right.

And that is service to the Lord. When someone is very frustrating and you're really frustrated with them, and instead of expressing anger and rage, you instead speak with kindness and maybe a soft answer to turn away wrath, that is a way in which we serve the Lord.

When there is a sinful temptation, and almost with all temptations, temptations to sin are opportunities usually to hurt someone else, to do something for our benefit at the expense of someone else.

And when we resist that selfish temptation, we are serving the Lord. You know, God speaks specifically about a certain group that we ought to serve.

In the book of Hebrews, this is Hebrews actually 6-10, you don't have to turn there, but he speaks of Christians serving one another. And he says this, For God is not unjust to forget your work and your labor of love which you have shown toward his name, and that you have ministered to the saints, and you do minister.

[ 29:52 ] You notice here he calls it a labor of love. When you labor or serve is a way of expressing love. The Bible teaches that explicitly.

Gary Chapman was right. Acts of service is a way to express love. A way that God designed us to receive and express love one towards another.

And by the way, when you're serving your Christian brother or sister, we're expressing love towards them, right? But is it just them? Well, and maybe I should have had you turn to this first, but what does it say?

For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love, which you have shown towards his name. He says, when you show that labor of love, when you minister or serve your brother and sister in Christ, it is a labor of love that you are showing towards him.

love it's a way for you to love the Lord by loving your Christian brother or sister. Does our acts of service, are they limited to just brothers and sisters in Christ?

[ 31:07 ] Christ? In Colossians, Paul is, you can turn there if you'd like, Colossians chapter 3, Paul's giving some instructions on service, on the kinds of people that we ought to serve, especially as Christians.

he talks about how wives ought to serve their husbands. He talks about how husbands ought to serve their wives.

He speaks to how children ought to serve their parents. And then he finishes up with how slaves ought to serve their masters. And then he finishes up with this.

This is Colossians 3, 23. He says, and whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ.

One, our service to others should not be from just a sense of duty, right? He says, it's something that should be heartily done, something that comes from the heart.

[ 32 : 27 ] And we do it not just as if we're serving them, because, well, we are serving them, but also to keep in mind that in serving them, we are serving the Lord.

And we have to, we should have that attitude in everything that we do, in every way that we serve in life, that we are doing it as unto the Lord. You know, back to, back to that illustration, and I guess I already, I already spoke about this, but when, when that sibling is helping the other sibling, the younger sibling with the homework, they're not just serving their sibling, they are serving their parents.

and that in the same way, when we serve others, we are serving the Lord. You know, I'd like to, I'd like to end, end with this.

As we said, you know, God initiated, he showed us how to love, he demonstrated it through the life that he lived here on earth back 2,000 years ago, and through the death that he died on the cross, on how to serve and how to lay down our, you know, just as he did, to lay our lives for others.

Let's look for how we can emulate God's love, how we can respond to that in our own lives. Just thinking about some ways that we might apply this, these ideas this week.

[ 34 : 19 ] You know, our lives are just full of service, right? We're constantly serving one other, moms serving their children, their husbands, husbands serving their families, people serving each other at work in work situations.

You might have a mom making breakfast every morning, or running another load of laundry for the fourth time today. You have, you know, somebody at work filling out another spreadsheet, or maybe you got a business owner who's pumping his neighbor's septic tank, or maybe you're babysitting your grandchildren, helping out your children with their kids.

Maybe you see that your neighbor has a driveway that needs shoveled, and you go and help them shovel their driveway, or maybe somebody's sick, and they need somebody to go visit them.

As we are serving others, and especially this week, think about something that we do maybe on a regular basis, and take the opportunity to think, you know, this is an opportunity for me not just to serve them, it's an opportunity for me to serve the Lord.

As an expression, by the way of gratitude for all that he's done for us. And so we can just take a moment as we're doing that thing, just talk to the Lord and say, you know what Lord, today I'm being intentional about doing this for you.

[ 35 : 51 ] And thank you for everything that you've done for me. How's that sound? Let's pray. Father, you have done so much for us.

Lord Jesus, you've done so much for us, even in an earthly sense. We're so grateful. You showed the way, you showed us how to serve, how to be servants to others.

You have a vision for what you want to see done in the earth. You want to see people loving one another, serving one another, and you want to see that done through us.

Help us to love you and to love our neighbor by serving each other well. Finding ways, maybe that are even beyond the norm, to serve others as a way to express our love, not only for them, but for you.

And we thank you for all you've done for us to show us the way that your love ultimately might continue to compel us to love and to serve others. We thank you for all of this in Jesus' name.

[ 37:11 ] Amen.