

Preparing to serve

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The habit of serving others is necessary for all Christians to develop, not only so congregations and parachurch organizations can run efficiently and effectively, but also so individual followers of Jesus can live out the calling he places on all of our lives.

If our service is to benefit us, our congregation or parachurch organization, and the kingdom of God, then we need to prepare to serve just as we [prepare to worship](#) and to [receive preaching](#).

Humble ourselves

Preparing to serve is a process, and the best way to begin that process is by humbling ourselves.

Humility can be a difficult concept for us to get our heads around, and it can be a tough sell in a society where self-esteem and self-advancement are seen as the birthright of every person.

Though I don't have any special insight into humility and have so much difficulty practicing it myself, I have come to believe humility is the necessary prerequisite for effective service to God and to our neighbor.

Fostering humility does more than reduce the amount of annoyance we cause those around us. It reshapes the way we view ourselves and our world. It creates the fertile soil necessary for love to grow, and it instills a passion within us for self-improvement.

How do we go about humbling ourselves? Not by engaging in negative self-talk, which only gives the Enemy a foothold in our hearts that he will use to drive a wedge between us and God and to undermine our attempts at

service.

Rather, we humble ourselves by imitating our Lord's example of self-denial ([Mark 8:34ff](#)). In ways big and small, we must act as if our own interests are less important than the interests of others ([Philippians 2:3-4](#)) and of God's kingdom ([Matthew 6:25-34](#)).

Humbling ourselves is not about denigrating our own humanity; it is about elevating the worth of others and celebrating the purposes of God.

Hone our skills

Our self-emptying pursuit of humility must be balanced with a dogged devotion to honing our skills for service. All of us have a unique set of vocational skills and avocational interests to offer. Each of these skills has value, whether it is physics or plumbing, crochet or cooking.

Skills have a way of degrading if they are not developed. Moreover, we cannot be the humble, effective servants Christ wants if we do not give some attention to our craft. Whether we are in construction or dentistry or play football or the flute, we owe it to God to do what we do to the best of our ability.

Making ourselves available

Skills also deteriorate when they are not used. We need to prepare for service by making ourselves available to serve. Obviously, we will want to serve in our church, but we also can serve in our community or even around the world. So many people and organizations need what we have to offer.

In some instances, we will need to get creative about how we offer our service. Some people's skills—such as finance, legal, personnel and

others—have immediate applicability to the life and work of the church, but it can be difficult to see how other skills can have an impact on our church or our community. With some creativity and some help from God and our congregation, we often can find a niche only we can fill.

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