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Weeks 11 to 14: Notes coming soon

Week 7, Serving as living stones

Starting: 19th October 2025

Read Exodus 35:30–36:1 and 1 Peter 2:4–10

Peter called God's people chosen and precious, set apart as a holy priesthood to offer 'spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 2:4–5). One of our spiritual sacrifices is our financial giving. Another is our acts of service. Over the next four weeks we will explore how our acts of service express our heart attitude towards God, our love for one another as a community united in Jesus, and our offering of our whole lives for God's glory.

Way back in Exodus chapter 35 we read 'see, the Lord has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom and understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic crafts. And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others' (verses 30–34).

We can see from this example that God chooses and gifts people for specific tasks. Here the task is to create the Tabernacle to God's design. In the next chapter we read, 'then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the Lord had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work' (36:2). Here we notice that God calls and gifts, but he does not force. Those who were called also needed to be willing.

As we read on in chapters 36 to 39 we find that it took the whole community to work together to create the Tabernacle. God called and gifted each person, not to work alone, but intentionally to work together to create something of beauty for the glory of God.

Do you have an experience of working in a team to do or create something for God's glory? What was the experience like? How did it feel to be working alongside others? What part did you play and how did that contribute to the whole work? Write down your memories of this below and share your story with others. If you haven't got an experience like this, write down your thoughts about what you hope it would be like.

The beautiful thing about being living stones built together by God into a spiritual house is that each person gets to play their part in a work that God has designed, planned, and brings to fruition through us. You may already be confident of your gifts and calling. However, perhaps you do not know what part God has equipped and called you to play. To explore this further it can be helpful to prayerfully identify our gifts and calling. Doing this in conversation with others can be especially rewarding.

Meet with people you know well and ask them what gifts they see in you. Do this for each other. Write down the gifts that others see in you.

Then pray together thanking God for the gifts he has given each of you and asking the Holy Spirit to help you understand God's call clearly. What sense do you already have of God's call? Is he revealing anything else about his call?

How might your calling and gifts contribute to God's mission in and through Christ Church? Have a look at weeks 1 and 2 if you need a refresher.

Next week we'll explore the ways in which our serving expresses our heart attitude towards God. Set aside some time in the week ahead to pray and reflect on why you serve others.

Week 8, Serving from the heart

Starting: 26th October 2025

Read Nehemiah 3 and Romans 12:1–8

Read Nehemiah chapter 3 and you will find there are thirty-three people mentioned by name and a further eleven groups of people. Nearly all are mentioned in recognition of the specific work they did in the rebuilding of the wall. Only the nobles of Tekoa are singled out as being unwilling to ‘put their shoulders to the work.’ These people have gone to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall with the promise that ‘the God of heaven will give us success’ (2:20). In later chapters we find their rebuilding being actively resisted by ‘Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod’ (4:7). They reach the point where their strength is giving out (4:10). In response, Nehemiah encourages the people with the appeal “‘Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome”’ (4:14). He organises them to both rebuild the wall and protect the people, and so the work continues. What can we learn from this about our works of service?

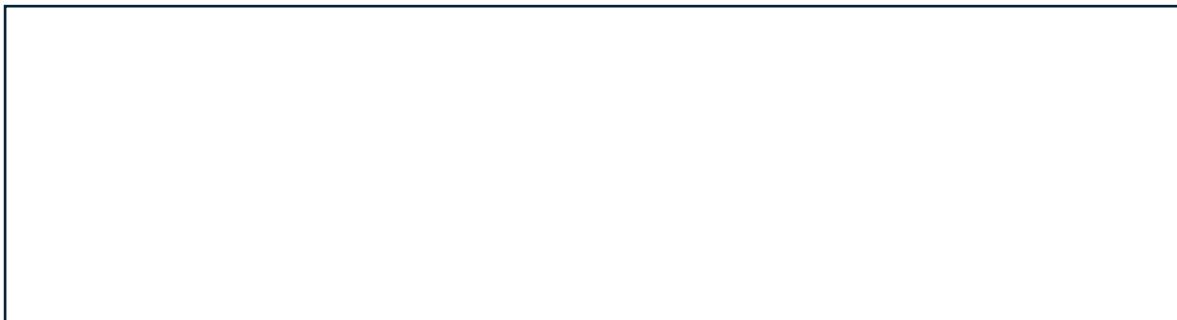
The people who chose to serve were first and foremost serving the Lord. Their motivation was not personal glory or ease. They went willingly to do demanding work in a context which became dangerous as neighbouring people rose up against them. They had to be flexible when this happened. Some people had to change their work from the relative safety of building the wall to the more dangerous role of protecting those doing the building. The point in all of this is that when we are serving God in the work he has called us to, things such as the specific tasks we do and recognition we receive become less important.

What things feel important when it comes to serving God as living stones in his kingdom?

How do we assess our motivation for serving?

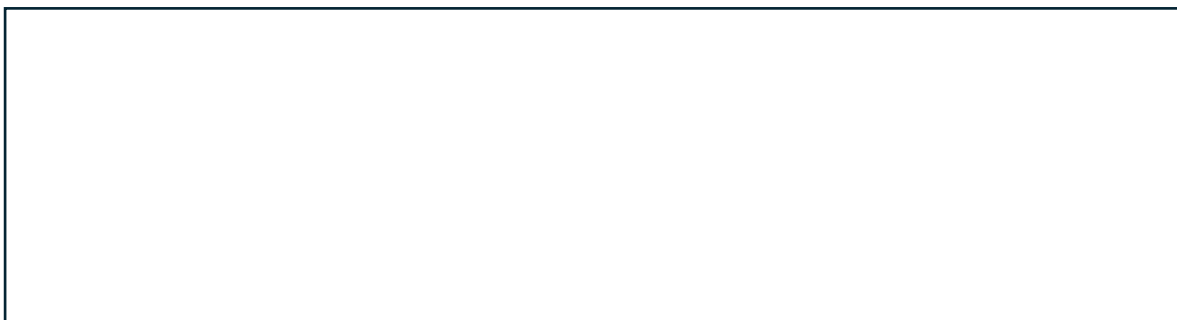
If our reading of Nehemiah chapter 3 evokes in us a sense that we have to get our hearts in the right place with the Lord before we start serving, then we should also read the accounts of some of Jesus' disciples. Peter often jumped in to help without thinking. At Jesus' transfiguration he offered to put up tents for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. What were you thinking Peter? James and John, the sons of thunder got their mum to ask Jesus for the best seats in heaven! Really? These same three disciples fell asleep when Jesus asked them to watch and pray in the garden of Gethsemane. Yet, Jesus continued to love them, invest in them and grow them into the people who would build his church.

Does serving need to start from the heart? Have you experienced a time when you've begun serving for other reasons and found that God has transformed your heart through the act of serving? Write down an account of this experience and if you're happy to, share it with others.



In Romans 12 Paul urged the followers of Jesus to offer themselves as a 'living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.' Helpfully, he then proceeds to explain what this looks like in our lives. We are to think of ourselves 'with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of [us].' We are all different, having been given different gifts and different roles to play in the work God calls us to. Our worship of God is expressed in offering ourselves to God to do his work rather than to demand the particular work we might want to do. That said, God knows us fully and knows what we need to do in order to grow into the fullness of who he has created us to be and develop an increasingly close relationship with him.

What is God calling you to do? Is this different from what you would most like to be doing?



Take some time to pray with others and offer yourself afresh to God.

Week 9, Serving one another in love

Starting: 2nd November 2025

Read Ezra 3 and 1 Corinthians 13:1–7

The people of Israel sing to the Lord with praise and thanksgiving declaring “God is good; his love towards Israel endures forever” (Ezra 3:11). The Hebrew word for love here is *hesed* and is more precisely translated as loving-kindness, steadfast love, or covenant love. It is likely to be a reference to God’s covenant relationship with them which is not only an expression of God’s steadfast love, but also a call for the people of Israel to respond with love. Their part in God’s covenant is to ‘love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength’ (Deuteronomy 6:5). Jesus brings this act of love for God together with that of loving your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 22:39, Leviticus 19:18).

Last week we explored how we serve from the heart. That is how we serve as an expression of our love for God. This week we explore how we serve as an expression of our love for each other.

Ezra chapter 3 opens with the Israelites assembling in Jerusalem. A literal translation of the ending of verse 1 is, the people assembled as one man to Jerusalem. The phrase ‘as one man’ emphasises a remarkable display of unity, shared purpose and community commitment to the work of restoring their life of worship. The acts of worship this enables are foundational to being a community who love one another.

Jeshua and his priestly colleagues and Zerubbabel and his colleagues start to build the altar in order to offer sacrifices and fulfil the law. Here there is a demonstration of cooperation between the priestly leaders, civil leaders and the people. There is a sharing of financial and material resources (verse 7) demonstrating clear evidence of neighbourly support.

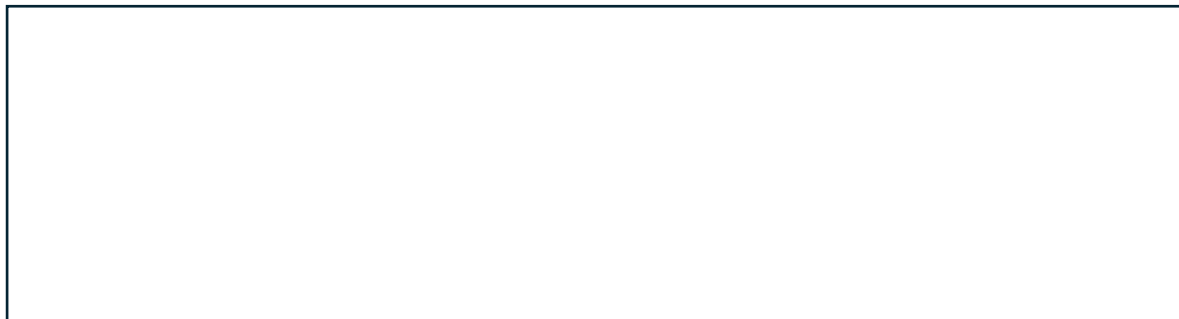
This work of restoration culminates in a shared emotional response. The younger generation shouting for joy and the older generation weeping. The open display of mixed emotions demonstrates a profound sense of community where there is freedom to be vulnerable in public. This is a community being shaped by love.

Have you experienced serving in a team where love for one another was evident? What was it like for you? How did people express their love for one another?

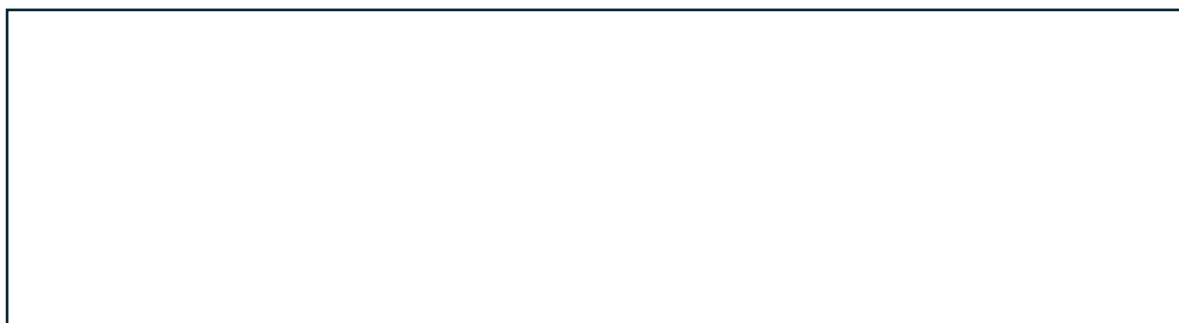
Jesus calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul tells us what that love looks like. I find the Message version helpful in providing a fresh perspective.

Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.

This is the highest standard of love. It is how we are loved by God and it is the standard by which God calls us to love one another. What do you think about holding this as the standard by which you treat every other human being?



Loving each other with this standard of love creates deep unity in a community. When this is present in teams of people focused on specific tasks, the team will perform better and demonstrate the kingdom of God in all they do. How would reaching for this standard of love change the ways in which you are present in any teams you are part of?



Pray with others and commit to reaching for this standard of love in every team you are part of.

Week 10, Serving for God's glory

Starting: 9th November 2025

Read Isaiah 6:1–8 and Colossians 3:23–24

God expresses his invitation as a question, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” Isaiah responds, “Here am I. Send me!” Isaiah didn’t know what lay ahead of him and he didn’t know what serving the Lord would require of him. He did, however, have sufficient trust and faith in God to declare his willingness to go wherever God would lead him.

Isaiah knew that if the need for someone to be sent made sense to God then that was enough. He didn’t count the cost in human terms, he simply trusted. This might look like foolishness on Isaiah’s part unless we recognise that the one who he is committing to is none other than the sovereign God, creator of the heavens and the earth and everything in them.

We live in a value exchange, or “what’s in it for me,” culture. Research by the British Heart Foundation found that 94% of Gen Z would volunteer but over a third would be more likely to if hours were flexible. We’re seeing a rise in trends such as ‘micro-volunteering’ (ad hoc, short commitments) and remote volunteering to accommodate time-poor lifestyles. This cultural reality is impacting the church. The Church Times found a concerning decline in key lay officers (Churchwarden, PCC Secretary, Treasurer). The Evangelical Alliance report that two-thirds of churches are experiencing a shortage of children’s work volunteers. This is often attributed to the high time commitment involved.

In this cultural moment it can be hard to comprehend giving ourselves in service to God for his glory alone regardless of the time commitment or cost to us personally. The unconditional nature of Isaiah’s “here am I. Send me,” is moderated to fit in with many competing demands on our time and attention. How then can we recover something of Isaiah’s unwavering commitment in our time?

Paul’s message in Colossians provides a helpful way of reframing our thinking. ‘Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving (Colossians 3:23–24). If we understand Isaiah’s commitment as unquestioning obedience to the Lord we start to see that this is actually about the availability of our hearts to God. Our heart attitude towards God becomes one that reflects his glory. Our schedules then become secondary to the primary question of “how does my decision honour Jesus?”

What would it look like for you to make every decision first and foremost from the perspective of reflecting God's glory? What would be the hardest areas of your life to commit to God in this way?

When we live in this way, our service shifts from being about us, our schedules and demands to being about God and his glory. Our primary concern becomes the desire for God to be glorified in all that we do. Our willingness to serve increases. Our need for recognition decreases. The value of others increases. When we live and serve for God's glory, our lives become increasingly shaped by his love and grace.

In what ways do church teams demonstrate the Gospel when every member of the team is serving for God's glory?

A key aspect of serving for God's glory is knowing and answering his call in our lives. How would you describe God's call in your life?

In what areas of church life and mission do you feel most called to serve and why?

Pray with others about this and take action to find out how you might begin to serve in one or more of these areas.