

Small Group Guide

In & Among Us | What God Does When We Serve (Part 1)

August 9, 2026

Overview

This guide is based on a sermon exploring what the Bible says about why and how Christians are called to serve within the local church. Rather than approaching service as a burden or debt to repay, the sermon invites believers to see serving as a natural expression of gratitude, family identity, and God-given gifting.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Serving is an expectation, not an option.** The parable in Matthew 25 makes clear that God entrusts each person with gifts and abilities, and he expects those to be put to work. Doing nothing with what God has given meets with his disapproval. Active, engaged service meets with his commendation.
 - 2. Serving is not debt repayment -- it is grace-giving.** 1 Peter 4:10 describes believers as "faithful stewards of God's grace." The motivation for serving should not be guilt, anxiety, or a sense of obligation, but a genuine desire to share the grace God has poured into our lives.
 - 3. Serving is a family responsibility rooted in identity.** Being adopted into the family of God (Romans 8) carries with it a natural expectation of participation. Just as members of a household contribute to the life of the home, members of the church contribute to the life of the body.
 - 4. God gifts each person specifically and purposefully.** Ephesians 4, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and 1 Peter 4 all affirm that the Holy Spirit distributes gifts to every believer for the benefit of the whole body. These gifts are not decorative -- they are functional and meant to be used.
 - 5. The church functions best when everyone contributes.** When any part of the body withdraws, the whole suffers. When all contribute together with gratitude and purpose, the church becomes what God fully intends it to be.
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Discussion Questions

Opening (Choose one to start the conversation)

- When you were growing up, what was one household responsibility you genuinely did not mind doing -- and one you tried to avoid at all costs? What made the difference?
 - Think of a time when you served someone and it genuinely felt meaningful. What was that experience like?
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Exploring the Sermon

1. The sermon identified several unhealthy motivations for serving -- anxiety, guilt, and resentment. Have you ever experienced any of these when it comes to serving in the church? What contributed to that feeling?
2. The pastor described serving as an opportunity to be "a steward of God's grace." How does that phrase change the way you think about whatever role you might play in the church?
3. 1 Peter 4:7-11 opens with a call to love deeply, offer hospitality without grumbling, and maintain a forgiving spirit -- before it ever mentions using gifts to serve. Why do you think Peter frames it that way? What does that order suggest about the heart behind service?
4. The sermon used the image of a family meal -- where some people have always known the routine and others are experiencing it for the first time. How does seeing the church as a family shape your sense of responsibility to participate?
5. The pastor drew a contrast between a "have to" mindset and a "get to" mindset. Which one more honestly describes where you are right now? What would need to shift for the "get to" perspective to feel more real to you?
6. Romans 12:4-8 lists a variety of gifts -- prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy. Which of these resonate with you? Are there any you have never seriously considered as a gift God might have given you?
7. The sermon acknowledged that people are in different seasons -- some are exhausted, some are new, some have young children, some are burned out from previous experiences. How does the church hold together the reality of individual seasons while still maintaining a culture of shared participation?

Going Deeper

8. The pastor said: "There is no other group of human people on this planet who have reason for gratitude than do those who have faith in Jesus Christ." Do you agree? How does the gospel -- the cross, the resurrection, the promise of eternity -- actually shape the way you think about giving your time and energy to the church?
 9. Ephesians 4:11-13 describes gifted leaders equipping the people of God so the whole body is built up toward maturity. What does it look like in practice for a church to function this way? Where have you seen it work well? Where have you seen it break down?
 10. The sermon closed with a challenge to lay this season of life before the Lord and ask what serving might look like -- not through guilt or coercion, but through honest discernment. What would that prayer actually sound like for you right now?
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Practical Applications

This week, try one of the following:

- Set aside time to pray specifically about how God might be calling you to serve in this season. Ask him to bring clarity about your gifts, your capacity, and where they might intersect with a genuine need in the church.
 - Have a conversation with someone in your small group about a time when serving in the church produced unexpected growth or joy in your own life.
 - If you have been on the sidelines -- whether due to busyness, burnout, or uncertainty -- identify one small, concrete step you could take toward re-engagement. It does not have to be a major commitment. It could be a conversation, a visit to a ministry, or simply filling out a volunteer interest form.
 - If you are already serving, reflect honestly on your current motivation. Is gratitude driving you, or has it drifted toward obligation? Bring that honestly before God this week.
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Closing Prayer Focus

Close your time together by praying for one another in these specific areas:

- That each person would experience a genuine renewal of gratitude for what God has done through the gospel
- That the Holy Spirit would bring clarity about each person's gifts and how they might be used this season
- That the group as a whole would model the kind of joyful, grace-driven participation that makes the church what God intends it to be