

## ***CAN I BE OF SERVICE?, PHIL2:19-30***

40 Days of Community #5

◆Intro: Every year since 1978 there has been an incredible test of skill and strength called the Ironman. It's a triathlon that takes place along the shores of the large island of Hawaii. First you swim 2.4miles in the ocean. Then you ride 112 miles on a bicycle. And you end your nice Hawaiian day by running a 26 mile marathon! I want to tell you the story of a very special entry into that race called Team Hoyt.

◆Rick Hoyt is disabled, unable to speak or walk. He has limited control of his arms. He lives moment by moment dependent on those around him. In an effort to connect with his son, father Dick Hoyt agreed to do the Ironman together. Dick pulls his son in a rubber raft through the ocean. He then puts him on the front of a specially fitted bicycle and rides him over 100 miles. The final leg of the journey, Rick rides in a specially equipped wheel chair that Dick pushes while he runs an entire marathon.

◆Father Dick, has become the legs and arms of his son, Rick. He has become his "servant". In him we have an image of a servant father giving his life energy for the joy and hope of his disabled son. And this is a perfect example, I think, of our 4th biblical purpose: service, or ministry. Let's think about what ministry really is.

◆**1. I have a ministry that goes beyond religious involvement.** If you hear someone declare that they've chosen to go into ministry, you might conjure up images of monasteries, robes, religious ceremony, chants, and the like. But that is not at

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all what we mean when we say we have a ministry. Paul was careful to point this out to the people of Philippi in chapter 3 where he counters folks that might assume religious pedigree is what counts.

- ◆ If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. Phil 3:4-7 NIV
- ◆ This is not what Paul is commending. Ministry is not
  - ◆ keeping certain rules or being strict about them (law)
  - ◆ following religious traditions or rituals (circumcised, a Pharisee)
  - ◆ having a history or heritage in church stuff (“tribe of”)
- ◆ Fact is, often these things sidetrack us as though they are ministry, while real ministry is preempted.
- ◆ **B.** We are using the term “ministry” or “service” very specifically in looking at the biblical purposes of the church. For our purposes, here’s how we’re defining it. Ministry is helping people in God’s family, while mission is helping people outside God’s family. Paul writes elsewhere...
  - ◆ *Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2, NLT).*

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◆ Anyone recall the “law of Christ” from week one? John 13:34  
“Love one another, by this will all men know you are my disciples...”

◆ **2. My service to others is one way of expressing my love to others.** The usual word for servant (and the one used in our text) is δουλος, from the verb δεω, to bind, or tie.

◆ When you “post bond”, you are tying yourself to another person’s obligations.

◆ Financial “bonds” are certificates of debt issued by a body or corporation guaranteeing payment of the original investment, plus interest, by a specified future date. When you purchase them you are tying yourself to the institution and they to you.

◆ **A.** Hence the term “servant” or otherwise “bond servant”. So a servant is someone tied to or bound to another. When I willingly offer myself as a bondsman/servant to another, I am actually building community! I am tying people together by serving them. People experience the reality of God not so much through religious jargon, or churchy phrases, but through God’s family applying their abilities in service to each other. In our text for today, Timothy is our example:

◆ v20 *he takes genuine interest in your welfare...* (what part of chapter 2 does that sound like?? v4!

◆ v22 *as a son with a father he has served with me...*

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◆ We learned on Week One that **humility** is what leads to fellowship (ie “genuine interest) among folks. No we’re seeing that fellowship is made tangible in service to one another. Paul uses here the son-father image to describe the close fellowship that service develops. Let’s return to the father-son story of the Hoyts.

◆ Ricky was born Jan. 10, 1962 and the doctors crassly said he’d be a vegetable the rest of his life. They advised putting him away in an institution, but the Hoyts took him home and raised him like any other child. It was to be a lifetime of constant service, born out of constant love. Dick Hoyt says, “Ricky is my motivator. He inspires me. When we’re out there *he’s* the one competing. I’m just loaning him my arms and legs.” Are you seeing what inspiration can come from loaning someone your arms and legs? Love can be expressed through arms and legs! In addition, as is often the case in love, it’s hard to say who is serving who, for one’s spirit in turn serves the other in a beautiful cadence of compassion.

### ◆ **3. My service is my turn to display God’s beauty.**

◆ *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10, NIV).*

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◆ Do you believe that there are unique marvels, gift-mixes, and graces in the universe that God has engineered into every person? Because that's what the Bible teaches!

◆ The Hoyts knew Rick was smart. They could tell he understood them, tracked with them with his eyes. So they had a computer built to help him communicate. Everyone wondered what his first words would be. "Hi Dad?" "I love you, Mom?" That year the Boston Bruins were going for the Stanley Cup. Rick's first words were "Go Bruins!" But those wouldn't be his last words. He would graduate from High School, and also college!

◆ People are full of ability. It's God's gift! I had a guitar instructor, a younger man than me, smaller than me, more gifted than me in music. I would hear a cool guitar riff on a song, bring in the audio for him to listen to, and he'd say "Oh here's how you do that..." and then he'd proceed to play it as though he'd written it himself and had rehearsed it for a month. I'd pay him \$15, kick him in the shins, and go home.

◆ I want us to observe that God clearly says each person he creates in his image is special in their own right. You are special in your own right. Which means many things, but for our purposes today, it means you have a service to offer the world and with which to honor God.

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◆ *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10, NIV).*

◆ The Bible talks repeatedly about how God gives individuals various abilities, among them artistry, architecture, administration, baking, boat making, debating, embroidering, engraving, farming, leading, masonry, music, painting, selling, soldiering, teaching, tailoring. Yes those are all mentioned in the Bible as being a gift God infused into specific people. Those are all ways of doing service. [We actually do have a class here in Sunrise that examines your giftedness. It's called discovering your SHAPE: spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, experience. When you're ready to find out more about how God made you tick, come see me and we'll set it up.

◆ B. That leads me to this observation: God has a specific place, or station in life for me to fulfill, and in which to be fulfilled. The intersection of your ability and the world's need is the place of personal fulfillment. Team Hoyt's story struck me with this truth. You see, Rick and I were born on the exact same day! We have both lived on this earth the same amount of time. He was given physical disabilities and challenges. I was given an Elder and Deacon board... Rick types on his voice projecting computer, *"I live a very fulfilling life. And if anyone gets to know me, they'll see that I'm just like anybody else."*

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◆ We each have places of contribution that include burdens, hardships, abilities and joys to work through. But we can make it, and even enjoy it because we have a God who's with us, and planned it.

◆ I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who lives within me. (Philippians 4:13, Phil).

◆ Fulfillment comes best when I offer my service in the world back to God.

◆ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 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, NIV).

◆ Whether you're teaching guitar, or painting a porch, harvesting corn, or dishing up soup -offer it back to God, and see how different it feels. Not only are you thanking him for the love you have from heaven because Jesus paid off your sins, but also you are storing up inheritance in heaven as well! While you're cooking at the stove say, "Jesus, this is for you." When you're driving a load of kids somewhere say, "Jesus, take the wheel!"

◆ **Conclusion:** When Jesus saves a person, it is not because of their service, but for service, which in turn multiplies community.

I think Dick Hoyts service to his son Rick is a great illustration of what service is. Team Hoyt has completed 257 triathlons, 72 marathons, 97 half marathons. Dick says he really doesn't care to run by himself. Rick is his inspiration. That's just like Jesus'

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love for us. He really didn't care to have heaven without us in it! True service comes from love. It's motivated by love. It has power from love. It's not about size, place. Service is about being a display of God's beautiful love, which always builds community. Take a look at this little clip as we close...