

Marks of a Mature Christian, Part 3

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How can you live for God and please Him? God tells you how, who you're to be, what you're to do, how you're to live. And what we're doing here at HBC is taking 4 weeks and looking at 12 marks of maturity, what a godly Christian should look like. Today we're talking about "*Loving Others, Serving Others, and Fulfilling Your Purpose.*"

First, let's talk about loving others. This is a big subject in this world, but it's usually talked about on a physical, relational, or emotional basis, but not on a spiritual basis. But God's word focuses on love from a spiritual basis, what we call agape love, and this godly love is essential, is foundational for relationships and the work God wants us to do. Eph. 5:1-2

1 John 4:7-21. Here we learn that agape love comes from God through Jesus Christ, and only those who are saved know this love. And God wants His love to abide in us, and then we can love others. And it's only by knowing God's love that we can love others. - John 15:12, 17. "*This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.*" God commands us to love others and that's because it's what others need more than anything else. God's love is to flow from God to us and then to others. The main way others know we're Christians is by loving them with God's love. John 13:34-35

So God commands us to love people, to have a heart for them, to be committed to them, to see them as ones loved by God. Now loving one another is a general command, but 1 Cor. 13 tells us very specifically what this should look like. 1 Cor. 13:1-3. This tells us that love is more important than anything else, more than faith, spiritual gifts, being a great giver, or anything else. Let's then look at what love looks like:

Love is patient, is long suffering, and this means being patient with people. As you know, people aren't perfect - they sin and hurt you and take advantage of you, and God wants you to put up with them, to be patient, and not get mad at them, and not retaliate.

- Love is kind, and this means being gracious and friendly and giving to people. You are to give your time, your money, your possessions, to both friends and enemies. Rom. 12:18

- Love is not jealous and this means you don't want what someone else has, whether it's their money, possessions, or their success. And you don't want people to fail so that you can look good – but rather, you are glad when others succeed.

Love does not brag. You don't try to make yourself look good before others. You are not a show-off, you're not wanting others to see what you have and what you've done.

- Love is not arrogant, is not proud. You don't take credit for what you have or do, but you give credit to God, for you know that all you have that is good is from God. Prov. 8:13

- Love does not act unbecomingly. You don't act rudely, and don't have poor manners. You are considerate of the people around you, you're polite and nice to them. Eph. 5

Love does not seek its own. You're not selfish, just thinking of yourself and wanting things for yourself. You're thinking of others and considering others more important than yourself.

- Love is not provoked. You don't get angered, upset, or irritated by others. This is similar to being patient, to putting up with others when they try to hurt you or don't do what you want.
- Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. You're forgiving, not holding something against someone else when they sin against you, when they do something wrong. Rom. 4:8.

And being forgiving is needed for unity, for good relationships, and for growth in the church.

Love does not rejoice in righteousness. You don't rejoice when there's evil, you hate sin and all unrighteousness. You are holy and righteous, and want righteousness to triumph. Ps. 102

- Love rejoices with the truth. You don't love lies or error, but you love the truth, you love what is true and right, and you love God's word. And you're glad when you see and hear the truth in another person. Ps. 119:74
- Love bears all things. You protect others, you cover their sin, and don't expose it or gossip about it. And you protect others from ridicule or harm, from bad people.

Love believes all things. You believe the best, you trust others and their motivations. You're not believing or expecting the worst. And you're not a negative person, looking at the faults of others but you think about their good qualities. And if someone is accused of doing something wrong, you consider them innocent, unless they're shown to be guilty.

- Love hopes all things. This relates to people who've sinned, who've failed, who aren't doing good. And you're expecting the best, believing that God will come through for them, that God will bless them, that God will bring them success.
- Love endures all things. This is similar to hoping all things but relates to more extreme situations, and to sickness or hardships that are long term. You support a person even when there's strong opposition, when things seem really unbearable. You keep bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things. True love perseveres, continues on, even against all odds.

We're talking about loving others, whether it's family members, people in the church, at work, out in the street, or those who are enemies. As I've already said, to love others, you need to be experiencing God's love in your own life. Your spiritual tank needs to be filled up with God's love, and then you'll be able to love others. 1 John 4:19

Let's talk about serving others. We know we're to serve God. Luke 4:8 - "*You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.*" Col. 3:24 - "*It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*" Acts 9:14 - "*Cleanse your conscience from dead works so that you may serve the living God.*"

- Now you serve God because He saved you and loves you; He's your Father and you are His child, and you want to serve Him because you love Him. And being humble is the key to serving God. You know God has authority over your life, and that He knows what's best for your life, and so you're humble and you submit to Him, you tell Him that you'll do what He wants, that you'll serve Him in the way He desires. Numb. 12, Ps. 25:4-9, Phil. 2:7-8

Now one of the main ways we serve God is by serving people, by ministering to others, by helping others. And we are to serve both believers and unbelievers. Gal. 6:9-10

- Gal. 5:13 – *“Through love serve one another.”* 1 Cor. 9:19 – *“Though I am free from all men, I have myself a slave to all, so that I may win the more.”*

- Acts 20:19-20. Paul was humble and therefore served the Lord. The rest of Acts 20 tells us that Paul served the believers by preaching to them and by teaching them.

- Paul wasn't serving in a cold, dry, lukewarm, or half-hearted way. Acts 20 shows us Paul's great love and heart for these believers - he was working hard, going day and night, boldly telling them the truth, and admonishing them with tears. 2 Cor. 12:15, Phil 2:17

So remember, we're left on earth to serve God by serving others. We aren't here to do what we want, to have fun, so we can eat, drink, and be merry. God could've taken us right to heaven once we got saved, but he leaves us on earth so we can serve others.

Luke 9:23 – *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.”* Phil. 1:21-25, Phil. 2

And so you need to realize that you're to serve God by serving others. And you need to believe that God can use you and wants to use you. Never think you are a nobody, that you aren't good enough, and that God can't use you in the lives of others.

- God gives you His grace so you can serve others. Eph. 3:7, 1 Cor. 15:10

- God gives you His Holy Spirit so you can serve others. Eph. 5:18, 21

But how do you know how God wants you to serve, how do you know what He wants you to do?

- Rom. 6:12-13. Give yourself to God. Tell God – *“Here I am, use me.”* Rom. 12:1-2

- Be humble. Remember, your life is not about you, but about God and others. Rom. 12:3

- Be in a church and spend time with believers; know that you're part of the body of Christ, the spiritual family. And as you do this, you'll see ways you can serve them. Rom. 12:4-5

- Use your spiritual gift. The Holy Spirit gives you spiritual gifts so you can serve others.

1 Cor. 12:4-9. If you're a Christian, use your gifts for the good of others. 1 Pet. 4:10-11

Read God's word, for it helps you know how you can serve others. Rom. 12:9-18

- Pray. Ask God to show you how you can serve others. It may be serving on the spur of the moment, or it may be something you plan out. Having lunch, work day

- Use your mind and be thinking how you can serve others. Heb. 10:24-25

- Ask questions when you talk to people and listen to what they say.

This is an important way to know how you can help and encourage others.

Let's now talk about fulfilling your purpose. This relates directly to loving and serving others, but there's more to say. And God's word gives us many examples of people and their purpose, the work that God wants them to do.

- Jesus' main purpose was to be a Savior, to die for people's sins. John 1:29, Luke 19:10
- Noah's main purpose was to build an ark to save his family and keep the world going.
- Abraham's main purpose was to be the father of the Israelites, of the Jews. Vs.
- Moses' main purpose was to lead the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land. Heb. 11
- Joshua's main purpose was to command Israel's army and lead her into the promised land.
- Deborah's main purpose was to help Barak defeat Israel's enemies. Judges 5
- Mary's main purpose was to be the mother of Jesus. Luke 1
- Paul's main purpose was to start churches and write God's word. Acts 20:24
- Paul's nephew was to warn Paul so as to save his life. That was his purpose. Acts 23:16-22

Each of you have a purpose from God, work He wants you to do. This may be small tasks or major tasks. It may take a minute to do, or it may take your entire life. And it relates to the church, your marriage, your children, your job, your friends, or something else.

- Eph. 2:10 – *"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."* God has work for you to do, work that He has already planned out. And it's good work. And it's work that you can do.
- Jer. 29:11-12. The work God has for you is for the good of others, and for your good too. And this work relates to God's plans for your life, to the future He has for you, on this earth and in the ages to come. Matt. 25
- Acts 20:24. You're to finish the race and complete the task God has planned for you. Life
- John 17:4. You bring glory to God by completing, by finishing the work He gave you.

What are some keys to knowing and fulfilling the purpose, the work God wants you to do.

1. Know that your work relates to loving and serving others. 1 Cor. 13:1-3
2. Pray, seek the Lord, ask Him to show you exactly what He wants you to do. Ps 143:8, 10
3. Be sensitive to God's leading – that is, be led by the Holy Spirit. Rom. 8, Gal. 5
4. Be holy. You can't do God's work if you're not a holy vessel. 2 Tim. 2:20-21
5. Be humble, be willing to do whatever God wants you to do. Psalm 40:8
6. Work hard, and you work hard by the grace of God. 1 Cor. 15:10
7. Work with others – don't be a loner, be a team player. Eccl. 4
8. Persevere, keep going even when you get tired and want to give up. Gal. 6:9-10
9. Look to Jesus, think about how He worked and what He went through for you. Heb. 12:1-3

And so you are to love others, serve others, and fulfill God's purpose for your life, and these are very important subjects – for they relate to your life on this earth, what God wants you to do for Him. How encouraging, how exciting that we can live for God. 2 Tim. 4:7-8