

## **Sermon Series: The One Another Commands**

**Sermon Title: Serve One Another**

**Sermon Text: Galatians 5:13-26**

**Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry**

**Sermon Summary:** This study examines the command to serve one another as stated by Paul in his letter to the Galatian Church. We will discover why we should serve one another as well as the benefits of serving one another. We're going to do this by dissecting these verses and extracting deep spiritual truths, deep, but not complicated. Truths that have the power to change our church, our community, our world, and you and me!

### **Full Sermon Notes:**

"Thank You Jesus You have saved my life! Brought me from darkness into glorious light!" And now that we have been saved from the lies and deception of darkness, we can begin living a different life! Instead of living in the darkness of self-serving vanity, we can begin living a life that is lived in the glorious light of loving God and loving others! It's a new way of life that brings rewards in this life and in the life to come! I want us to pray and ask God to teach us the power and beauty of today's "One Another Command!" Prayer

Of all the things in this world you could be involved in, other than accepting Jesus as your Savior, the one I will talk about today has one of the highest potentials for changing your life. Of all the ways you could spend your time, few things will bring you a greater return on your investment! Of all the activities you could immerse yourself in, few things will bring you greater rewards! If you begin doing what I will encourage you to do today, you will become addicted, but it's okay, it's one of the few addictions in this world that's a-okay!! Okay, Bro. Larry, what in the world are you talking about? I'll tell you, but at first you're going to think I'm out of my mind. Or you may think I've got an ulterior motive. Are you ready? Let's look at the first verse of our text which is Galatians 5:13.

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

### **Serve One Another!**

Some of you may be a little disappointed. You might be thinking: "I liked the 'encourage one another' command from last week, but serve one another, I don't know about this one!" But if you hear me out today and let the things I share with you from God's Word really sink in, I believe you might even change your mind about this command. And when you get it and start living it, it will really change your life. I promise!!! Don't get me wrong, "Serving One Another" isn't easy! And sometimes the rewards and benefits are a bit delayed. For example, Children's ministry. Sometimes it may be years before you hear someone tell you their life was changed because of your sacrifice. But, hey, their whole life was changed. This means their marriage was changed, their children's lives were changed. You've changed the world, by serving one another! When you serve one another you change the future of the world!!

We're going to look at our text today verse by verse. We're going to discover why we should serve one another as well as the benefits of serving one another. We're going to do this by dissecting these verses and extracting deep spiritual truths, deep, but not complicated. Truths that have the power to change our church, our community, our world, and you and me!!! When we think about serving one another we must come to a place of...

## **1. Understanding Our Freedom**

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature ; rather, serve one another in love.

There's a specific reason Paul wrote these words to the Galatian Church. Remember that Paul's main calling was to reach out to non-Jews, known as Gentiles. It wasn't that he did not care for the Jewish people. He did. Paul was Jewish. He even once said he would be willing to give up his own salvation in exchange for the salvation of his Jewish brothers. Of course we know that's not possible. I can't save you and I can't be saved for you. Your salvation is dependent on your willingness to respond to the very gracious offer God has made to you through the work of His Son Jesus on the Cross. Only Jesus can save you, and remember, He will not force His salvation on you, you must accept His grace. Here's the story: Paul planted this church based on the good news that Jesus had given His life in order to make a way for humanity to come back to God! However, people known as Judaizers, came in the church and began to demand that the new converts adhere to strict Jewish laws such as circumcision. Paul called this legalism. Legalism is the religion of the world. Legalism is what the world understands. It's transactional. In other words, everything is based on a legal transaction. "You do this for me and I'll do this for you." It's the way of society, business, and politics. It's a natural thing for people to think religion should be the same. "I do something for God so God will do something for me." It's a transaction. A business deal. Some people's relationship with God and their church attendance is based on this ideology. Instead of truly repenting and seeking to change and walk in closer fellowship with God, they just do their religious duty and figure their good deeds will even out their bad deeds. So their salvation is works based and not grace based and they have no understanding of the freedom we have in Christ! Paul had this to say at the very beginning of his letter...

Galatians 1:3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Galatians 1:4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Galatians 1:5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

Galatians 1:7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Did Paul have an opinion on this issue of legalistic, works based salvation? Yes he did! So what does this have to do with serving one another? More than you might imagine.

People have the tendency to go to extremes and evidently some of the members of the Galatian church were doing just that. Some were thinking, "okay, I'll serve others if it will gain me some religious points. If it's the law, I'll do it. I'll serve because I have to!" That's not the freedom Christ wants us to have! And then on the other hand you had those who were thinking, "okay, it's by grace and not by works, so I'm free. It doesn't matter what I do or don't do! So I can do whatever I want, and I don't want to serve anybody." So Paul replied in our text the words we read a moment ago...

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

When we think about serving one another we must come to a place of...

## **2. Knowing Our Motives**

Motives determine whether your service to one another is Joyful or painful, done with a smile or with a growl, truly helpful, or doing more damage than good? Paul's next statement says so much...

Galatians 5:14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

It's like he's saying: Okay, you guys and gals who love the law, the summary of the whole law is to love your neighbor as yourself. You want to do things by the book, okay, here's a law for you:

"Love your neighbor as yourself"

Some legalistic, by-the-book people don't like statements like that because it has to do with the condition of the heart, rather than the outward appearance. Some folks live by the old "I'll do it, but I don't have to like it" attitude. But God says, motive matters. And for you guys and gals who love the freedom found in Christ and aren't so tied up into the legalese or letter of the law, Paul kind of sums up all the technical points and letter of the law with this simple explanation...

"Love your neighbor as yourself"

So, serving one another really comes down to a matter of motive. Here's some questions to think about...Do you serve one another because it's your religious duty, or do you serve one another, because it's your privilege, your honor, your joy? Do you serve because you think you have to in order to earn your salvation, and right status with God, or because someone has a need and you want to be used by God to help meet that need? Or you might even be in the camp that says, "Hey, that serving one another thing is just not my gift, okay!" Some people do have a special gift of service, but all of us are called to serve one another. "I don't have that gift"

is not going to fly as an excuse!! Another question would be: Do you see serving one another as payback for something done for you, or do you see it as giving back out of a thankful heart?

Sometimes we complain about the complications of the law, but this one is simple. And where did Paul get this "Love your neighbor as yourself" concept? Let's see...

Mark 12:28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

Mark 12:29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Mark 12:30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

Mark 12:31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

Now to be sure, you can't love others if you don't love yourself! So self-care is important and you can't neglect or ignore the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of yourself, but there's another word we must not neglect and that's self-control. Because self must be controlled and we need God's Holy Spirit to do that! Without self-control things get out of hand quick. In fact Paul continues by saying...

Galatians 5:15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

People who aren't serving one another in love will eventually walk down a destructive path. Refusal to serve one another is a red flag indicator that self is in control instead of Christ! When self is in control, let me just say, "It ain't pretty!" You've heard the term, self-serving? When you're not serving others, you are self-serving. There's no other way around it. There are so many needs all around us. So many ways to serve others. The sad truth is this: there is only one explanation for disobeying the one another command to serve one another and that is when we are too busy serving ourselves. The religious leaders of Jesus' day had this problem. Listen to what Jesus said...

Matthew 23:25 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Matthew 23:26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

Jesus later described these people as people who would not help others...

Luke 11:45 One of the experts in the law answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also."

Luke 11:46 Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

You may feel that you're in the clear since you aren't making laws and putting burdens on others' backs to carry. But let me say this. If you know there's a need and you know you could help, but just walk away as if the need didn't exist, you are being selfish and you've forgotten something very important that Jesus preached while He was on this earth. Paul reminded the elders of the Church at Ephesus of this very important teaching of Christ...

Acts 20:35 "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Here's something I can tell you from personal experience. When Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive, He wasn't lying. A lot of people hear that statement in our world today and they just look at you like you're crazy. "Come on, you think I'm going to buy that?" I'm never going to believe that. I love getting things. I love stuff. I like new things. Things make me happy." Well let me respond to you. Stuff can make you happy for a little while, but then it gets old and breaks, or a thief might break in and steal it, or a tornado or hurricane could take it away in a matter of minutes. During Katrina, much of my studio equipment flooded. My old 1948 Chevy Truck flooded, still working on that! Sand blasted on the frame this week. You may not know I also had a two door 1969 Chrysler Newport. It not only flooded, but someone vandalized it after the storm and broke out the front and back windshields. I gave it to a friend for parts. Storms can separate you and your stuff permanently! If your happiness is in your stuff, then the storm takes your happiness as well. But let me tell you what the storms of life can't take away from a follower of Jesus....

Storms of life can't take away my relationship with God!

Storms of life can't take away God's love for me!

Storms of life can't take away the treasures I've stored up in heaven by serving others.

Jesus said this...

Matthew 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

Matthew 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

How many of you remember what you got for your birthday last year? How about 5 years ago? How about 20 years ago? I ask you that because of what I'm about to tell you. I can't remember a lot of things that have been more about me, but the times God graciously used me to help someone else, well many of those times are burned into my memory. They have special meaning to me. Back in 1989 I made my first trip to Haiti. On that trip we hiked up a 4,500 foot mountain to build an above ground cistern to catch rainwater from the little tin roofed church

building with dirt floors. We ran makeshift gutters from the church over to this round concrete structure we had built to store the water. The people in that little village had no running water and had to walk up and down the 4,500 ft mountain to get buckets of water from irrigation ditches for bathing and drinking. It was not a good situation. Each night we had a worship service in the little church. It had dirt floors and tree saplings for ceiling joist. One night a lady with a small baby wrapped in one of those little cloth pouches stood up to speak. She spoke through an interpreter. Her words are seared into my memory. She said...

"I would like to thank my friends from a far away place. You were willing to leave your paradise to come and help us in our poverty. Thank you so very much for coming."

She wasn't jealous or angry that we lived in a paradise, just overwhelmed that we would leave our paradise to come and help her little mountain community in Haiti. I was telling a dear friend of mine that story and he said it reminded him of someone else that once left a paradise to help people in need. And who would that be? That's exactly right. Jesus Christ! He left the splendor of heaven to come to a world in dire spiritual poverty. He came to save us out of that spiritual poverty. And haven't we been talking about what it means to be Christian in the past few weeks? To be Christian means that we are to be Christ followers, more like Jesus in the way we live and treat people! A people who desire to be like Christ. Jesus served others. I understand it's not always easy to serve others. It can be difficult to overcome our tendency of being self-serving. Sometimes we're just tired and feel the pressures of life and don't feel we have the margin in our life to serve anyone. You may feel like you just don't have the strength to serve others. Here's the truth, you may not have the margin or the strength to serve others in your own power, but let's see what Paul says next. It shows us where we can find the strength to follow Christ by serving one another! And here's something you must understand: Serving others starts with a choice! You will not discover the strength to serve others until you make the decision to serve others! When we think about serving one another we must come to a place of...

### **3. Choosing Our Actions**

Galatians 5:16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

There's always a battle between our sinful nature and The Spirit of the Lord. Our sinful nature wants to serve itself. It only thinks of self. On the other hand, The Holy Spirit is always prompting us to look beyond ourselves, our wants and wishes to see the greater things. To see the hurts and needs of others. It's a choice and the Holy Spirit of God is constantly prompting us to make the right choice! The Holy Spirit wants us to find and fulfill our God given purpose in life. And what is that purpose? God wants us to be vessels of His Holy Spirit, His presence, His love, and His power to serve others. But you might say, I just don't know if I can do anything for God.

I'm not that special. I don't have a lot of talent. You don't have to be a fancy vessel. Just a willing vessel. A vessel willing to be emptied of self so you can be filled up with Jesus serving others with the love and in The Spirit with which Jesus served!

We have to let the Holy Spirit empower us! We have to let the Holy Spirit enlighten us! We have to let the Holy Spirit inspire us! We have to let the Holy Spirit fill us! When we let the Holy Spirit empower us we can overcome our old sin nature. When we let the Holy Spirit enlighten us we begin to understand that it is truly more blessed to give than to receive. When we let the Holy Spirit inspire us, a passion for doing God's will overcome our selfish wants and desires! When we let the Holy Spirit fill us there is no room for the destructive and divisive old nature.

Paul put it this way in his letter to the Corinthians...

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

Did you notice that we're supposed to reflect the Lord's Glory? Did you notice that we're supposed to be transformed into His image? Jesus served others! His whole life was about serving His Father and those He had come to save!! We're supposed to do the same thing. And make no mistake about it. It is a ministry. Paul said: Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. A dear friend of mine who lives just outside of Nashville Tn. Dennis Ritchie wrote these words on a recent blog at [The Art of Standing.com](http://The Art of Standing.com)...

"Darkness cannot stop light. Hate cannot end love. Evil cannot extinguish good. Because all of these things are reborn with every rising of the sun...You may rest before you rise but never tire of doing good. For in so doing, you may find that you have become for others the thing you needed most. And when they, in the future, look back to find the reason that they keep doing God's great good, they may think of you."

Ministry is not just for full-time, vocational ministers. If we are not all serving one another then the ministry God wants the church to do will not get done. It's going to take all of us serving one another in the church and outside the church. "Okay, preacher, I bet this whole sermon was so you could get more people to help out with things at the church. Right?" Remember at the first of the sermon, I told you some of you might think I had ulterior motives. I'll be honest with you. Yes I hope some of you will be motivated to help out with some of the many needs here at Northshore Church. Especially as we get ready to reopen our Shore Kids ministry in full! And of course there are many other areas of need in our church for servant hearted people who want to help us achieve our mission of...

Transforming Worship, People and the World.

However, God knows my heart. If because of today's message you simply start serving one another at home. Being less selfish at home, more caring. I'll be good with that. If you notice that elderly neighbor you've only waved at a time or two and you go over to their house and offer to help them with their yard work, or just sit with them on the porch and let them know you care, the message will have hit it's mark. By the way, when you're serving others, listen to their stories. You might just learn something from them. I had an elderly man latch on to me at a wedding a few years ago. He had been part of starting a church up in Virginia. At first I was just being friendly and listening and then God spoke to my heart and said, "This is your brother, really listen to him. Really care." At that point I noticed the passion for God in his eyes and the excitement he had for God's kingdom. I also realized that I probably would never see this guy again this side of heaven. Then I realized that God might just be trying to tell me something through this brother's experiences. Guess what? He did. God spoke to my heart and I learned some valuable lessons! So cool how God works!!

Paul does something next that I believe puts it all into perspective for us. He contrasts the old selfish nature and its flesh driven outcomes with our new nature and its Spirit driven outcomes! When we think about serving one another we must come to a place of...

#### **4. Realizing Our Outcomes**

##### **A. The outcome of self-serving yields the fruit of the flesh**

What Paul says next may seem extreme, but I can assure you that he is not exaggerating! When people are self-serving, it goes in a very dark direction really quick! Paul says...

Galatians 5:19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; Galatians 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

Galatians 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

When we decide to serve ourselves, it's not a pretty picture. The world is full of horrible examples. We've seen another horrific school shooting, just this past week! As I've said before, self left to self turns inward. Self, if allowed to be in control, will choose selfish, self-serving and self-destructive behaviors every time without any regard for the impact on others. Self will choose what is pleasurable for the moment with no thought of consequences. Self, if not under the control of the Holy Spirit, hurts others and it ends up hurting itself! And the world is always trying to lure and tempt us to live self-indulgent lives because it stands to benefit when we live that way! Could that be happening in St. Tammany Parish right now? Vote your convictions, but let me just say, I don't believe the folks pushing the casino have our community's best interest at heart! We must realize there are outcomes for every decision we make, good or bad! Paul then shows us that...

## B. The outcome of serving others yields the fruit of The Holy Spirit

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Galatians 5:23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Which outcome should we choose? I think it should be a no-brainer!! Joy, peace, patience, kindness, right? But for some reason, it seems that many people in this old world choose the crazy list. The destructive list...

"hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions"

Jesus lived to serve others. Jesus died in service to others! I'll close with something Jesus did and something else that happened to me on that mission trip to Haiti back in '89. You might remember back a few weeks ago I mentioned Jesus washing the feet of His disciples.

John 13:5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

After He had washed their feet He said...

John 13:14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

John 13:15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Believe it or not, there are still times when people actually have a foot washing service. Don't get nervous, we're not going to do that today, but let me share with you that other life changing experience I had on that trip to Haiti back in 1989. The leaders of our team wanted to show the people of that little mountain community just how much we cared about them and loved them. Not just with building that water cistern, but in some other tangible way. They decided we would wash their feet during the worship service that evening. They had some tin wash tubs. We had a little cloth to wash their feet in the tub. As you can imagine the water got dirty very quickly because some of them had no shoes or cheap flip flops or shoes without strings and open. The man whose feet I washed was an elderly man. You don't see too many elderly men in Haiti. The life expectancy there for men is only 61.3 years. That's younger than me now! As I started to wash his feet I realized how calloused and broken they were. The little old man was precious, and I was honored to wash his feet, but then something occurred to me...Jesus walked in a rocky, dusty land just like this man. Jesus' feet were probably calloused, broken and dirty as well. Then I remembered something Jesus had said...

Matthew 25:40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

I realized at that moment, in a way I am washing the feet of Jesus! A precious moment got more precious and I fought back the tears. Folks, we are to serve one another, and when we do, we are serving Jesus, because He takes it personally when you do something good for one of His kids! Let's pray!

### Sermon Study Guide

Can you share an experience where you served someone and yet feel you benefited more than the person you served?

Why do you think people are drawn to legalism and works based salvation? How does that line of thinking affect our motives for serving one another?

Rom 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,  
Rom 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Rom 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,

Rom 8:4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

The Bible tells us to store our treasures in heaven where they can't be lost. What are some ways serving one another also brings good to us in this life?

2 Cor 9:5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

2 Cor 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

2 Cor 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

The Holy Spirit helps us to help others. How?

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

Give a few examples of how Jesus taught us by example to serve one another.

Mat 20:25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

Mat 20:26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

Mat 20:27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--

Mat 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."