

“UPGRADING OUR SERVE”
Joshua 24:15

WHAT?

“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” The phrase has been our theme for the past year.

Back in the fall, we learned that “we begins with me.” That is, that if “my house” is going to serve the LORD, it begins with me.

This evening I want us to think about the word “serve.” “As for me and my house we will serve the LORD.” What does it mean to “serve the LORD?”

For Joshua it meant:

- **Leading the children of Israel across the Jordan and into the Promise Land**
- **Engaging and destroying the city of Jericho**
- **Clearing out and settling the twelve tribes of Israel into their appointed territories**
- **Establishing cities of refuge**

What a list! What a servant! But that’s how Joshua served the LORD. What does “serve the LORD” mean for us? Give me some examples . . . [Press for specific examples, not general statements.]

It's obvious that serving the LORD means different things for different people. But one thing is true for all us: we all want to do our best for Him. In fact we continue to look for ways to upgrade our serving Him.

- We try to be sensitive to the Spirit's promptings.
- We determine to listen more closely to what God says to us through His Word
- We examine our spiritual walk in the light and life of Jesus
- We offer as an act of worship all of our actions as students and faculty at Nazarene Bible College

I could go on, but you get the idea.

Let me suggest here that upgrading our serve for the LORD should *not* include doing more than what God wants us to do.

You know what I mean, don't you?

Upgrading our serve by getting ahead of God's will is like:

- Turning up the heat in the oven so the cake will bake faster
- Dumping dry ice into the punch bowl so the punch will cool quicker
- Cutting the grass extra short so you don't have to cut it as often
- Changing the OS on a friend's computer so it will run faster without telling them how to operate the new system

The idea of upgrading our serve by getting ahead of God's will reminds me of a story I heard about a preacher who accepted an assignment at a Methodist church in South

Carolina. The appointment process had gone well. He and the people of the church seemed to hit it off real well.

- Old, overgrown tree by the entrance
- Pastor wanted to do something special for the congregation
- Cut down the tree without asking for any help
- Told the congregation on Sunday what he had done
- Found out from the congregation that John Wesley had planted that tree during his missionary trip to America
- The pastor packed his bags on Monday

SO WHAT?

Upgrading our serve for the LORD is not doing more than He has asked to do. It's certainly doing what we've been called to do with increasing excellence, increasing diligence, and increasing reliance on Him. But most of all, the best way to upgrade our serve for the LORD is very simple. The best way to upgrade our serve is to obey.

Remember the quote we talk about in Introduction to Christian Service? Can you finish the sentence? "God doesn't want you to save the world. God wants you to ____." [Obey]

I want us to review how Joshua served the LORD by obeying Him. You'll need your Bibles for this:

Joshua 1:1 - "... the LORD said to Joshua;

1:10 - “So Joshua ordered . . .”

Joshua 3:7 - “And the LORD said to Joshua . . .”

3:9 - “Joshua said to the Israelites . . .”

Joshua 4:1 - “. . . the LORD said to Joshua,”

4:4 - “So Joshua called . . .”

Joshua 4:15 - “Then the LORD said to Joshua . . .”

4:17 - “So Joshua commanded . . .”

Joshua 5:2 - “At that time the LORD said to Joshua . . .”

5:3 - “So Joshua made . . .”

Joshua 6:2 - “Then the LORD said to Joshua . . .”

6:6 - “So Joshua son of Nun . . .”

Joshua 7:10 - “Then the LORD said to Joshua . . .”

7:16 - “Early the next morning Joshua had . . .”

Joshua 8:1 - “Then the LORD said to Joshua . . .”

8:3 - “So Joshua and the whole army . . .”

Joshua 8:18 - “Then the LORD said to Joshua . . .”

8:18b - “So Joshua held out his javelin . . .”

Joshua 11:6 - “Then the LORD said to Joshua . . .”

11:7 - “So Joshua and his whole army . . .”

Joshua 20:1 - “Then the LORD said to Joshua . . .”

20:7 - “So they set apart Kedesh . . .”

Joshua’s life of service is an excellent example of how best to upgrade our serve for the LORD. He did not take matters into his own hands – like Moses. He did not “help God out” by doing something he hadn’t been asked to do – like Samson. He didn’t

get ahead of the LORD in his service to Him – like Saul. Joshua stayed close enough to the LORD to hear Him and then, when the LORD told him to do something, he obeyed.

Joshua embodied the oft repeated word of the prophets who followed him: “to obey is better than sacrifice.” One of those prophets said it this way:

[Sing “To Obey is Better than Sacrifice” by Keith Green]

To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice

**To obey is better than sacrifice
I don't need your money
I want your life
And I hear you say
That I'm coming back soon
But you act like I'll never return**

**Well you speak of grace and My love so sweet
How you thrive on milk
But reject My meat
And I can't help weeping
At how it will be
If you keep on ignoring My Word**

**Well you pray to prosper
And succeed
But your flesh is something
I just can't feed**

**To obey is better than sacrifice
I want more than Sundays
And Wednesday nights
'Cause if you can't come
To Me every day
Then don't bother coming at all**

**To obey is better than sacrifice
I want hearts of fire
Not your prayers of ice
And I'm coming quickly
To give back to you
According to what you have done**

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NOW WHAT?

You have in your hands a copy of our theme: “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” I want you to find something to write with. In a minute I’m going to ask you to cross out the word “serve” and write in the word “obey.”

Interesting, isn’t it, how the word “obey” has more power to it, demands more from us than the word “serve.” Sometimes, somehow we can shape the meaning of the word “serve” so that it fits us and our agenda more than it fits God’s. But when we use the word “obey” it’s on the LORD’s terms. It’s His call. It’s His schedule, His plan. It’s the ultimate way to upgrade our serve for Him.

So, are you ready? Let’s cross out the word “serve” and write in the word “obey.” And if you’d like an extra level of accountability, turn the card over, write your name and address on the blank side of the card, and give it to me as you leave. I’ll hang on to your card and then mail it to you in May. Knowing it’s coming might help you remember that the best way to upgrade your serve for the LORD is to “obey.”

[Close with “Yes, Lord, Yes.]