

Sent to Serve
John 12:20-26
Gulf Mission Trip Testimonies

Slide Show of Photos from New Orleans Trip /Testimonies

John 12:20-26. “Whoever serves me must follow me and where I am, My servant also will be.” These folks served Jesus by following Him...all the way to New Orleans. Is Jesus in New Orleans? Of course He is. Do you think God cares about the folks in the Gulf who are still suffering from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina? You bet He does. Jesus says that where He is, those who follow Him must also be. And so these 12 followed and went and served. And I have no doubt that the Father will honor them for their service, even as we do today.

But let me be clear: you do not have to go all the way to New Orleans to serve God, to follow Jesus. You *must* follow and you *must* serve, but you do not necessarily have to leave home in order to do it. We were created by God to serve. Our preparation Scripture, Eph. 2:10, says that we were “created in Christ Jesus,” for a purpose: “*to do good works.*” Each one of us was uniquely shaped by God to serve Him. Your relationship with God – your personal spiritual growth – is not meant to be exclusively for *even primarily* for your own benefit. You were not put on this earth merely to soak up all the blessings you can for yourself. You were put here to make a contribution. You were created to do good works prepared *in advance* by God *specifically* for you to do. You are not here to *get all you can* out of life. I know that’s what the media will tell you and your friends will tell you. But that’s a lie from the pit of hell. You are not here to *get all you can* out of life but to *give all you can* – in Jesus' name. To give all you can as Jesus gave: selflessly. Sacrificially.

John 12:26: “Whoever serves me must follow me and where I am, My servant also will be.” 1 Peter 4:10: Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others... The root of the word for ‘serve’ and ‘servant’ here and elsewhere is *diakonia*. It’s the root of our word for deacon. In the Bible, it is also translated as *minister* and *ministry*. ‘Servant’ and ‘minister’ are synonyms in the Bible. It’s the same Greek word. So it’s not only ministers who are, well, ministers. *Whoever* serves God is a minister. We are called to and commissioned for ministry by virtue of our *baptism*, not because you go to seminary or are elected to serve as an elder or deacon. Every Christ-follower is called to ministry. Every Christ-follower is called to serve. Every one of these folks who went to New Orleans did not go merely as tile layers or.... They went as ministers, followers of Jesus, called by God and sent to serve.

So: How many of you are baptized? Let me see your hands. Okay put them down. Now, how many full-time ministers do we have? *All of us*. You are all called to full-time ministry. The Christ-following life is a lifestyle of serving others in Jesus' name. Oh, I think I oughta say that again: The Christ-following life is a *lifestyle* of serving others in Jesus' name.

Now, not everyone is called to follow Jesus to New Orleans. Some of you are called to serve Jesus by following Him into our nursery on Sunday mornings. Some of you are called to serve Jesus by following Him to Edgemoor Gardens for the big neighborhood clean up on June 6. Some of you are called to serve Jesus by following Him to your neighbor down the street or the

student in the next row or your co-worker in the next cubicle, with a word of encouragement or an offer to help.

Now, if you are not sure how God has shaped you to serve Him, take CLASS 301 next week, or take 201 on June 14 so you can take 301 the next time it's offered.

I don't know how each and every one of you is called to serve Jesus. But this I know: each and every one of you *is* called to serve Him. And we do this, Jesus said, by following Him, by going where He goes. By giving as He gave. It is totally inappropriate to say, "I'm too old to serve," or "I'm too young," or "I'm too new to the church," or "I've already done my part," or "I'm too busy." You were shaped for serving God. And you serve God by serving others. "Where I am," Jesus said, "My servant also will be." So you gotta go. You gotta go where Jesus is. You gotta go where Jesus sends you. You don't have to go all the way to New Orleans to serve God. But you were created to serve Him. You were created and uniquely shaped for serving God and God's purposes in His world.

There is a place in this community of faith for you to serve. The gifts and talents and passions and personality and experiences you have had were given to you by God *for a purpose*: He expects you to use them to serve others. That is our incredible purpose and privilege, church. To serve the world in Jesus' name. And when we do that – when we serve as Jesus served, when we give as Jesus gave – we show the world what God is like.