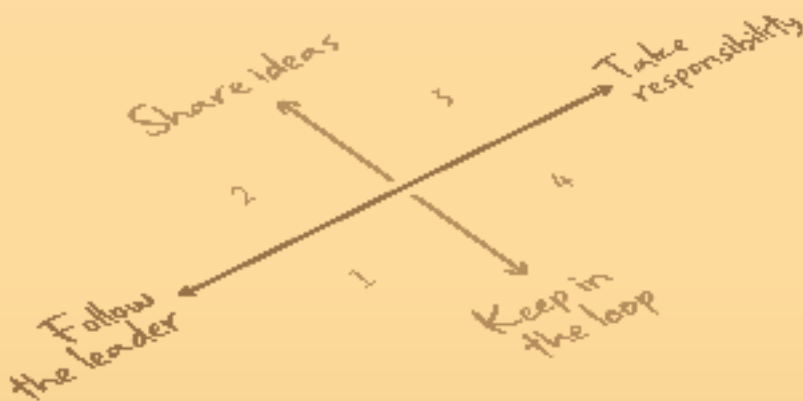


THE TEAM MEMBER'S HANDBOOK

How Christians
serve Jesus together



DAVE MOORE

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serve Jesus **together**

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The Team Member's Handbook

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To Evie
Love, Dad

*Sickle and plough, tractors and horses.
All hands! For the harvest is plentiful.*



INTRODUCTION

The first ministry team I remember being part of was the Youth Group team at my local church. I'd just graduated from high school, moved house, and joined a new church. One Sunday after church, Pete, the youth pastor, sidled up beside me.

"Hey Dave", Pete said, "you know how we do Youth Group on Friday afternoon?"

"Yeah", I said.

"Any chance you want to join the team?"

"Sure!"

"Great", Pete said. "The kids arrive at 7pm, but the team arrives at 6, so I'll see you then."

And that was it. I was a member of the Youth team.

Over the next few weeks, however, I realized I didn't quite understand what it meant to be part of the team. In fact, I hadn't really thought about why I wanted to be on the team in the first place. I found myself feeling confused—was I serving Jesus, or the youth, or Pete, or the team? Or all of them? And on top of all that, it took a while to work out what things I was meant to do and what things I wasn't meant to do.

I really wish someone had captured all those issues and helped me work through them as I started.

That's what this book is all about: how to be an awesome team member in your church or ministry setting; how to see

it as a way to serve Jesus; and how to think about your role, responsibilities, and relationships with your team leader and your fellow team members.

Whether you're already serving in a ministry team or you're thinking about joining a ministry team, my prayer is that this handbook might help shape your prayers, your heart, and your habits as you serve Jesus in your team.

In fact, why not join me in asking God to do that right now:

Dear Father God, please help me as I think about what it means to be a member of a team in my church or ministry setting. I want to serve you with the right heart, I want to be Christian in the way I work with my team, and ultimately I'd love you to use me and my team to play a small role in growing your kingdom. Please help me as I grow into doing that. Amen.

How to use this handbook

For the most part, I'm going to talk about teams in the context of a *church*, but if you're serving in a ministry organization outside of church, the principles should be the same. This handbook is for anyone who's a member of a team of Christians engaged in Christian ministry together. It's for team members helping to run the children's ministry, youth ministry, music ministry, welcoming team, catering team, bookstall, lawn-mowing team, seniors' ministry, finance team, Christmas outreach event, or anything else you can imagine. But it's also for people helping to run a Christian ministry outside their local church—ministries like beach missions, campus

ministries, chaplaincies, Bible giveaways, Christian media, or combined churches outreach events. Even if you're not part of a team right now, this book will prepare you to serve Jesus together with other Christians in the future.

The reason the book can apply to so many people in so many roles is that, wherever possible, I'll point to the big principles that guide our thinking about team-based service. Even when we come to practical tips, they'll usually be adaptable to a range of situations. The idea is for this to be a resource to come back to again and again to help you reflect on the foundations of serving in a ministry team.

Even if you've been serving in church for years, my hope is that the principles laid out in the following pages will help anyone as they take on the wonderful responsibility of serving Jesus with other like-minded Christians.

We're going to start with the gospel and think about the type of heart we want to cultivate as we approach any Christian service, and why being in a team is a great way to express that heart (part 1). Then we're going to look at the foundations of being a team member—what we ought to be praying for and caring about (part 2). Then we'll turn to the core competencies of a team member—the basic activities that will help you and your team, regardless of the ministry you do (part 3). Finally, I'll suggest a range of tools that might be useful for further thought and personal development (part 4).

While my first week as a Youth Group team member was filled with considerable uncertainty, I'm happy to say that's changed. Now I truly love team ministry. And I hope this book will help you to love it too.

PART 1

**SERVE BECAUSE
OF JESUS**

Much of this book is about serving Jesus as a team member in some type of church ministry. However, this assumes that you are on board with the idea of serving in the first place. Most Christians would nod their head to the idea that serving is an important part of the Christian life, but why is that? Before we look at the nuts and bolts of serving in a team, we need to contemplate *why* we serve.



Over the next few weeks, I kept turning up to be part of the Youth team; I ran a game one week, and generally helped manage the chaos of thirty teenagers on a Friday night. Somewhere in there, Pete asked me to start meeting up with him on a Sunday afternoon to chat about youth ministry. To be honest, I thought he wanted my advice on how to make things better. But it turned out he was keen to read the Bible together, and he wanted to challenge some of my attitudes.

“So, Dave”, Pete said, leaning forward, “how are you finding being on the Youth team? What do you enjoy?”

“I love hanging out with the other leaders”, I replied. “I’ve only been at church for a few months, and I feel like the leaders are a group of friends that I’ve become part of, you know?”

“I’m glad to hear that”, said Pete, “but are there other things you like about being on the team?”

“Sure”, I said, starting to feel like I might be running out of things to say. “I like hanging out with the kids, too. And I think they like me.”

Pete didn’t say anything; he just nodded slowly, waiting. A thought burst out of my mouth before I had a chance to stop it. “I really like telling the kids what to do!”

Pete blinked in surprise. “Really?”

“A bit”, I said, trying to backtrack, “not heaps, but it’s kinda cool when you tell them to stop and they actually listen to you. You know, when the talk’s on, or when they’re not listening to the game instructions.”

“Dave”, Pete said, tilting his head to the side, “I wanted to raise something with you. Is there a chance that you care more about feeling like a Youth leader than you care about the youth and their relationship with God? I might be wrong, but I just wanted to check if you’re doing this for Jesus, or doing it for yourself.”

I didn’t know what to say. I’d never really thought about it as starkly as that before. Did I love ‘being a leader’ more than I loved the kids? Was I really just doing this thing every Friday because I got to hang out with new friends and feel some sense of authority?

I felt the weight of the silence in the room. “I don’t know”, I said eventually. “Maybe?”

Pete smiled his warm, understanding smile. “How about we ask God to help us brainstorm some more ‘Christian reasons’ to be on the team? Would that be helpful?”

“Yeah, I think I need to rethink some things.”



What should motivate Christians to serve at all? First and foremost, Christians serve because Jesus is our Lord who served us *and* because we want to be like Jesus.



1

JESUS, OUR LORD, SERVED US

I hope this goes without saying, but the news of the gospel is that Jesus is *the* Lord; he is God the Son. He makes this incredible claim: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt 28:18). That means he’s not *a* lord over *some* realms. He’s not *a* lord for *some* period of time, nor is he *a* lord for *some* people. Jesus is *the* King, *the* Master, *the* Lord, *the* Ruler; he is *the* authority over *all* realms, *all* time, and *all* people. And the appropriate response to this kind of forever King is to serve him as we would serve God, because he is God. As Jesus suggests, “when you have done all that you’ve been commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants who have done our duty’” (Luke 17:10). It’s as simple as that. Christians serve Jesus with our whole lives because to do otherwise would be completely insane (2 Cor 5:13ff).

It’s worth pausing right here to answer these questions:

- What do you think of when you say, “Jesus is my Lord”?
- Are there aspects of your life that you’re reluctant (or refusing) to place under Jesus’ lordship? For example,

all 24 hours of every day? All your money? All your dreams and desires?

- If you were to sit down with Jesus, like you were having an annual review, what do you think Jesus would want you to change about your life?

While Jesus is the Lord we are to serve, our reason for serving Jesus goes far beyond this fundamental truth.

Jesus served us

The wonderful news of the gospel is that God, in the person of Christ Jesus, has lovingly served us. This is a profound and amazing concept! Other gods and idols do not serve their worshippers—that would be a demeaning and humiliating act for a pagan god, since the lesser serves the greater. And yet the God we meet in the Bible is a serving God who clothes Adam and Eve, protects Abraham, and provides food for Israel in the desert. It should constantly astound us that the God who created the universe would say, “I am your God; I will strengthen you, help you, and uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isa 41:10). And help us he does! God comes to us in the person of Jesus, the great servant. Look at what Jesus says the night before his crucifixion:

“The kings of the nations dominate them, and those in authority are called champions, but not so with you. Rather, among you the greatest should be like the littlest, and the leader like the servant. For who is

greater—the servant or the one being served? Surely the one being served! Yet among you, I am like the servant.” (Luke 22:25–27)

Jesus wants us to grasp how strange it is for him to be “the servant” to us. It’s meant to shock us, because Jesus is the greatest King and the highest authority; he literally owns everything, and he is the one to whom every creature in existence should be bowing. Yet he chooses to help us by taking the punishment we deserve! Within hours of saying those words to his disciples, Jesus had been mocked, beaten, whipped, spat on, stripped, stabbed, and crucified—all for us. He did not hold back anything; instead, he gave up everything to ensure we get saved. It’s no wonder Jesus’ servant heart is the focus of the earliest recorded Christian song:

Christ Jesus,
though in very nature God,
did not seize divine equality,
but took a servant’s nature,
made in likeness of men.
Being found as a man,
he was humbled,
obeyed death,
even a cross. (Phil 2:5–8)¹

1 This is my own translation, which attempts to draw out the poetic, song-like aspects of the passage. A less poetic translation might be:

Christ Jesus, though in nature God, did not consider his equality with God as something to be taken. Rather he emptied himself, assuming the nature of a servant—being made in the form of mankind. And being found in the form of a man he humbled himself, being made obedient to death—even death on the cross.

From the very start, the earliest Christians were blown away by how God in Christ served them. It really is an amazing thought that God would so lower himself—not simply to walk among us, but to love us, save us, and die for us.

If you're a Christian, you follow a humble servant. Our whole religion is centred on a guy who gave up his status, his glory, and his life to serve people like us by saving people like us from the hell we deserve. Jesus' loving service of others is at the absolute heart of the Christian faith. This means before we jump to *why we serve*, we must first be blown away by the amazing and beautiful truth that *Jesus served us*. It's worth pausing to pray at this point:

Eternal God, it is so incredible that you, in the person of your perfect, eternal Son, would take on human nature and become my servant. It's incredible that Jesus would serve us before we served him. It's humbling that he would serve us more than we can ever serve him. It's beautiful that you are a serving God, and that we get the absolute privilege of being served by you, despite how terribly we've treated you. Thank you for your pure, loving, and servant heart which we get to enjoy. Amen.

So how should we respond to Jesus' servant-heartedness? Thankfully, Jesus himself tells us.

Serve like Jesus

In John 13, Jesus tells his closest disciples to follow him in serving others. But it begins with an insight into what Jesus understood about himself:

Jesus, knowing that the Father placed all things into his hands and that he had come from God and he was returning to God, rose from the meal, changed his coat for an apron and began to wash the disciple's feet. (vv 3–5)

Again, this is shocking service. Jesus knows that all things are under his authority, and what does he do with that knowledge? Take command? Issue orders? Demand servitude? No. Amazingly, he does none of these things. Rather, Jesus does something considered demeaning, even beneath a regular household servant: he gets up to wash filth from feet.²

He moves from powerful to humble, from greatest to least, from King to servant. And look what he says next:

When Jesus had washed their feet, he put his coat back on and returned to the table. He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me teacher and Lord—and rightly so, for I am. Therefore if I, your teacher and Lord, have washed your feet, you should wash one another's feet. I have set an example for you, that what I did you also might do.” (John 13:12–15)

Jesus gently but firmly tells us to serve like he does. That doesn't mean we must go around literally washing people's feet. It means we humble ourselves in every aspect of life and serve those around us. We follow Jesus' “example” by living for others in everyday life. This gives our lives a clear and amazing

2 “The washing of feet was considered too demeaning for disciples (or even a Jewish slave) and thus assigned to non-Jewish slaves” (Andreas J Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Baker Academic, 2004, p 405).

purpose: live for others, not yourself. The apostle Paul says this beautifully in 2 Corinthians:

Jesus died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but live for the one who died and arose for them. (5:15)

Can you see why we, as Christians, find ourselves serving others? Can you see why Christians in your church and throughout your life have done things for others and for you? It's because they know what it's like to be served *by Jesus*, and they want to be more like him.

As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians, we are to imitate him as he imitated Christ (11:1). And Paul's imitation of Christ was about giving up his own rights, his own preferences, for the salvation of others—for that's what Jesus did for us (9:19–23, 10:33). Christians serve others in love and humility because we want to be like our amazing Lord Jesus, who served us when we didn't deserve it.

Reflection questions

1. In your own words and in just once sentence, how would you say Jesus has served you personally?

2. How do you feel about being served by Jesus? Does it make you feel special, or uncomfortable, or pressured, or proud?

3. What do you love about how Jesus has served you? What aspect of Jesus' service of you most astounds you?

4. How is Jesus going to the cross for you similar to Jesus washing the feet of the disciples?

5. If Jesus wants you to think of him as an example for you to follow, what might that mean in your circumstance? What might it mean for you to serve others like Jesus served you?

6. We live in a culture that champions the idea that people “live for themselves” (contrasting with 2 Cor 5:15). How do you see that cultural doctrine affecting your worldview?