

# START

Start takes you back to the basics of Christianity for a new believer, and helps people walk through those first days as a Christian. For some, Start is a refresher course.

We've talked about who God is. We've talked about God being three persons in one. We've talked about the Bible, the authority and truth of Scripture. How to listen to God and confirm what God is doing in your life. We've talked about the church being like a family.

Now we're talking about service.

After you know God, what you're called to do is serve. That's service.

## **The Bible teaches you how to become great**

Not necessarily on this earth, but with an eternal mindset.

Matthew 23:11 (NIV) says, "*The greatest among you shall be your servant.*"

As the Bible says, we are to become great by serving. We serve each other. It's hard in this world. People don't like to serve. I recently went to a Bavarian Inn restaurant. I arrived 5 minutes before closing. All I wanted was a pretzel, but the staff didn't want to serve me. So much so, that the manager replaced all the staff and came out with a smile on her face, saying, "I am so sorry. I'm going to be here to serve you."

I know they probably spit on my food, but it was still delicious.

The manager was so pleasant and kind. We had a great time. It was a good experience. We had a great connection and conversation. She didn't have to serve me, she could have closed the doors, but instead, she chose to serve. That act made an impression on me. If I go back to that city, I'll go back to that place. Thanks to the waitress manager.

## **You must die**

When we look at life and our relationship with Christ, we become great by how we serve. We become servants for each other. But to truly become a servant, we must first die.

*"And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."* Mark 8:34-35 (ESV)

Not a physical death. This isn't a Kool-Aid sermon. But you must die a spiritual death. You must die to self, and be reborn into relationship with Jesus Christ.

Have you ever truly died to yourself?            YES    NO

We belong to Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:27 (ESV) says, “*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*”

What church do you BELONG to? (Belong as in—serves and is part of the congregation)

---

We must belong to the body of Christ—the church. To do so, we’ve got to die to ourselves. We must fully commit to Jesus. Scripture over and over talks about how we have to be reborn. As Christians we are reborn into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Our old self is gone, and our new self replaces it.

“*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*” 1 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV).

What is the evidence of your spiritual rebirth? How are you different?

---

---

---

That’s why it’s hard for me when people talk about, “Cyle, you wouldn’t like me before I was a believer.”

My answer is—I don’t really care. That person died. You buried him or her, so to speak. They don’t exist anymore. As a pastor, I have seen countless people transformed from who they were to who they are in Christ.

God changes people miraculously.

It doesn’t matter who you, your spouse, your boyfriend, your parents, your children, or your coworkers were. If they died to themselves, they’re a different person. It would be bad for me to hold something against someone who has died and has been reborn.

You can see that negative perception a lot in family relationships. “You used to do this.”

“Well, yes. And then I formed a relationship with Jesus. Before I gave him my heart and life. Yes, I was different. But God has transformed me.”

## You must fully commit

Revelation 3:15-16 (ESV) says, *“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”*

The Bible talks about us when we fully commit. We have to be all in or all out with God. There is no lukewarm. Some of us try to straddle the fence.

Do you try to straddle the Christianity fence? Half in and half out sometimes?    YES    NO

In the city with the Bavarian Inn, there was a whole line of fences. I had my nice camera, and I thought, “I could hop over this fence.”

Then these two kids on skateboards came over. If I tried to hop and couldn’t make it, they would have the time of their life laughing at me stuck on the fence. So, I decided to go all the way around. I didn’t want to be half over the fence. I probably would’ve fallen on my face.

For some of us, your living your life where you’re straddling the fence. You’re stuck. You’ve got to go all the way over or go back. God doesn’t want us to be lukewarm. He wants you to be all in hot or all out cold.

We want to be all in for Christ.

We must fully commit to a relationship with Jesus Christ. When we’re all in, we serve him. If your struggling with being all in for Jesus, you can say this in your heart right now, *“God I’m all in. That old person is dead. Now, I give you everything.”*

## Not too tired, too poor, too busy, or not educated enough

Many people make excuses for why they straddle the fence. “I’m too busy. I’m too tired. Too poor, not educated enough in Scripture.”

Those are terrible, lame excuses. If you’re too busy, it’s a you problem, not a Jesus problem. It means you’re too busy to put a priority on your eternity. Don’t say, “I’m busy with work, family, and my kids’ activities.” That’s exactly what lukewarm is.

You will always feel too tired. Believe your job is super stressful. Be lacking in sleep. Or not have enough time to serve at a food bank. You have to push past these distractions and temptations and live for Christ.

What distractions or attitudes are keeping you from fully living for Jesus? Are you too busy, tired, etc.?

---

---

---

Some of the most serving people I have known in my life are people who don't have much money. They give and give.

There's story in Scripture of a lady with nothing to her name. All these rich Pharisees are standing around talking about how great they are because they give so much. There's this tithing offering pot. They're all tossing money in. But because of their wealth, they're really not tossing in much. So, this poor woman comes and tosses in two widow's mite coins which in today's value might be 1/10th of a penny. You couldn't even buy a loaf of bread with the money, but it was all she owned. The Bible says her gift was greater than all the Pharisees'.

Read the widow's story below:

*"21 As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4 All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."* Luke 21:1-4 (NIV)

What do you think of this story? How does it make you feel about your finances and God?

---

---

---

You're never too poor to serve God. You can give what you have.

Have you ever felt like you don't know enough about God and/or the Bible to share with people about him? You don't have to know everything to love and serve God, you just have to be honest. Many times, the best answer is, "I don't know. Let's look at Scripture together."

As a pastor, I don't even know enough. Faith just requires you to love Jesus, to serve Him. You'll learn as you go.

### **Put others first**

As we commit, we have to put others before ourselves. That's what it looks like to love the Lord.

Matthew 25:40 (NIV) says, *"And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'"*

When we look to what service is, it's looking into the world and loving people. It's that simple. To serve others is to take the people who are the least in the world and love and elevate them. When we serve the least of the world, and we doing it because of our love for the Lord, then we're serving God.

We are supposed to be like Christ. Jesus himself showed us how to become a servant.

Philippians 2:5 (HCSB) says, *“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”*

The problem with a lot of people I know is, their attitude is not of Christ. That’s why we have grumpy Christians. I’ve looked for the verse in the Bible, “And Jesus was grumpy.” I’ve never seen it. Jesus was never a crotchety person. He was a person who loved people. He served them.

When we look to see how we can best serve people, the first place it starts is with our attitude. What does your face look like? Do you smile? Are you excited to see people?

What does your face display? Are you a happy person? If not, how can you fix the way people view you?

---

---

One of the first things you can do is make your attitude match that of Jesus Christ. Sometimes you have to force a smile. There are times you’re not having a great day, but you still are a representation of Jesus.

Every Sunday, our building guy has to plunge a toilet. And he does it with a smile. He doesn’t let it affect his attitude. We have to have that in every moment of our life. When you’re at school or work, with people that treat you badly, you still have to have an attitude of Christ.

We have to **give up our rights**.

Philippians 2:6 (HCSB) says, *“who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.”*

Jesus himself, while he was in man form, gave up his own rights so he could be used by God for something great. We have to do that same. It doesn’t matter what you want to do in life. What matters in eternity is, what Christ wants you to do. You’re here to serve God.

Then, you have to **empty yourself**.

Philippians 2:7 (HCSB) says, *“but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”*

Jesus came as a slave for us. For those around him, he came not to be served, but to serve. He came to serve and seek the lost, heal the sick.

He came to serve you.

Just like Jesus, we have to empty ourselves and understand our role is to serve. Jesus must become greater, and I must become lesser.

“He must become greater; I must become less.” John 3:30 (NIV)

You have to worry less about your own interests and more about God’s interests. You need to fill yourself up with him. Bury the old version of you. The “New You” needs to be like Christ.

As we do that, we have to **be obedient to God’s word.**

Philippians 2:8 (HCSB) says, *“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*

Jesus knew that the cross was always the destination. He could’ve said, “I don’t want to do that.” But he didn’t. He was obedient all the way up to death. We as followers need to be obedient to God’s word.

You’re not being asked to be crucified. For most of us, God is asking us to wake up tomorrow and be a positive person who shares the love of Jesus through our attitude, behavior, communications, and relationship. We’re not being martyred on a daily basis in 2019. We’re being asked to love people.

We need to have **real obedience, not selective obedience.**

People will obey parts of God’s word, but they kick out the parts they don’t like. We really need to be obedient to God’s *entire* word. Jesus came in the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. When he came in the New Testament, he simplifies things. “This is what I command you to do. Love me. Love others.”

*“36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”* Matthew 22:36-40

Jesus made it simple for us. Love him, and love others.

Do you love others on a daily basis? If so, how? If not, why not?

---

---

---

In the latter part of the New Testament, the apostles put together a bigger understanding of God's word for us. But what happens is, some people take those ideas and say, "I don't like that one."

We can't do that. God's word is all for us. Not parts we like today and not tomorrow. Obedience to God's word is the humility of selflessness. When you understand that your self doesn't matter anymore, you have humbled your life to the Word.

### **Humility is rewarded**

Philippians 2:9-11 (HCSB) says, "*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

Jesus was exalted by his sacrifice.

James 4:10 (HCSB) says, "*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.*"

Proverbs 22:4 (HCSB) says, "*The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life.*"

All throughout the history of Scripture, we are called to be humble. To not be braggarts, but just be humble. Recognize that others should have more value than yourself.

God wants us to love each other. He gives us the power to serve each other. Even when we think we can't.

You have a God that will help you to serve others, even when you don't think you are capable of doing so.

Ephesians 3:20 (NIV) says, "*Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.*"

We don't need to worry about what we can or can't do, because Christ can do all things through us. God will work in and through you. All he asks you is to give yourself to him completely. Be used by Jesus for his service.

### **If I'm supposed to serve, then how do I use those gifts to serve others?**

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NIV) says, "*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*"

You are called to use the unique gifts and abilities that are distinct to you. God created you as a special creation and he wants you to use your skills and abilities to serve. You can't do everything in life. But as you come together with other believers, there's someone else in the

congregation who will be able to do the things you can't. When we serve together as faithful stewards in a community—we do life together.

Use your skills to let people see God in a powerful and real way.

Whatever you have been given, you are to use it. I know my gift is being a pastor. That's why God called me into ministry. For others, you haven't had the same calling. Maybe, you're better with your hands.

This church has a lot of great mechanics. They show up when someone is in need and help them fix their vehicles. That's showing God's love in a real, tangible way. We also have congregants that show up and visit when people are sick. Or make them meals.

We're just there for each other in times of need. As a church, we also do the same for those in our community. We embolden each other to serve.

A pastor's job is to get you excited to serve. But that's also every believer's job for each other.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV) says, *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*

I don't know if you know what a spur is, but it goes on a boot and you kick the horse. It doesn't sound fun if you're the horse. We're supposed to motivate each other to do good in the world, even if it hurts a little.

We should walk away from conversations with other Christians and say, "I want to do more for the Lord."

That's what we're called to do for each other.

### **Who do we serve?**

Matthew 25:35-36 (NIV) says, *"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."*

We serve the **hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, and imprisoned**. Scripture shows us what the world looked like 2,000 years ago. Guess what, it still looks the same today.

Do you know people who are sick, poor, in need, hungry, imprisoned, or strangers? Make a list of three persons and write how you can serve them:

---

---

---



Every community has people in prison, sick, downtrodden, strangers, and struggling to pay their bills.

They're in your community.

What are you doing in your personal life to serve them? It's not your job to go to a church where only the pastor serves people. You should be doing that on your own.

If you are not attempting to meet those kinds of needs, you're missing out on an important part of your relationship with God.

### **Orphans and widows**

James 1:27 (ESV) says, "*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*"

You are also called to visit and care for widows and orphans.

As people become widows or widowers in your church, how do we love them? How do you meet their needs?

---

---

What about orphans? People in foster care? How do you step out and love people and serve them? What are you doing on a regular basis?

---

---

This lesson is not designed to make you feel guilty about not serving. It's about finding ways to equip you to serve, so you go forth and do it. Find a way to plug-in in your church or community.

Give respite to families who do foster care. Visit widows and widowers at your church. Set up a meal or do something together. Even if you're young, you can still do these things.

### **What does this mean for you?**

You're called to serve. Not when you have extra time. You're called to serve now. You're called to serve today, tomorrow, and the rest of your life.

And, you need to sacrifice your own comforts to do it. You don't just get to rearrange your life so that serving isn't a burden to your schedule. We're called to serve first.

That's where I see a lot of Christians mess this up. They only serve when it's beneficial. Or when they have extra time. I hope more and more believers will understand that they're called to

service *and* sacrifice. Resist the temptations of society and the pressures of extracurricular activities.

It's more important to be right with the Lord.

When you serve, you resemble Christ and share his light with the world.

When people see you genuinely sacrificing, they are changed. They see something different about you. They see you love the Lord with all of your being. If you want to love the Lord, the way you do it is give yourself to him. Recognize that who you were is dead, and you're reborn into a life of service. Humbly value others more than yourself.

And love others as you love God.

If you're ready to start, it starts today. Find somewhere practical to serve and get your feet wet. You don't have to go from 0 to 60 overnight.

If you find someone's car broken down this week, stop and help them. If there's someone who needs food, feed them. If someone lost a loved one, visit them or call them.

Find some way to plug in. And once you serve once, find your next way to plug in. Once you start finding routine ways to plug in—watch what God does.