



CONTRIBUTE CLASS

Class Objectives

At the end of this class, students will be able to:

- Have a basic understanding of why Christians serve and what it means to contribute
- Identify character qualities that a contributor ought to possess
- Discover biblical principles and practical applications for serving in ministries and/or Life Groups

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SESSION 1: WHY DO WE CONTRIBUTE?

Introduction

One of Jesus' most startling acts is recorded in John 13:1-17. At His final Passover feast, Jesus laid aside His outer clothes, wrapped a towel around His waist, and washed the feet of His disciples.

They were stunned and perplexed. Feet washing was a lowly task meant for slaves. How could Jesus, the Son of God and their Master and Teacher, humiliate Himself this way?

From Jesus' striking example we learn this: Love defined by God is one of humble service. Just as He exhorted His disciples, Jesus is challenging believers today to follow His example.

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. *Jn 13:14-17*

What is "Contribute"?

Hope Church Singapore adopts the ABCD Discipleship model to guide believers in taking the next step to grow as disciples of Christ. Step C stands for "Contribute to God's work". Just as Jesus showed a model of humble service, contributing to God's work means to humbly serve to build up the body of Christ. Regardless of our education, family, background and socioeconomic status, Jesus calls all of us to serve.

Why do we contribute?

Our journey of contribution starts with one word – grace.

Out of His immense grace, God offers us forgiveness for our sins and salvation from eternal death. Before we can offer anything to God, He has invited us to eternal life through the blood of Christ (Eph 1:7-8; 2:1-9).

Grateful to God for His grace, we want to glorify God and do the good works He has prepared for us to do (Eph 2:8-10). These include contributing to God's work by building up the church (Eph 4:11-13).

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Eph 2:8-10

The Church, an assembly of God’s people, has great value in God’s eyes. Not only has Christ died for the Church, He has a marvellous plan for it. The Church has the privilege and responsibility to glorify God. It has the mandate to make disciples of all nations, to reach the world with the Gospel of Christ. There is no greater privilege than to participate in building God’s Church.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. *1 Pet 2:9*

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Eph 3:10-11*

Reflect

Why is it important that our service is motivated by our gratitude to God for His grace? What happens if we forget God’s grace as we serve?

SESSION 2: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A CONTRIBUTOR?

Introduction

By His grace, God appoints us to contribute to His work. By our merits alone, we cannot earn the privilege to contribute. We can only receive it with humility and faith.

Beyond background

God chooses us to serve regardless of our education level and occupation. In the Bible, God's servants come from a wide range of backgrounds. Peter was a fisherman, David and Moses were shepherds, Nehemiah was a court official, Paul was a tentmaker.

More than character

God calls us to serve despite our flawed character. God's servants, many of whom we admire, did not have a perfect moral track record. David committed adultery and murder, Abraham lied to save his own skin, Paul was a persecutor of the church. The list goes on.

Just as God graciously appointed them to serve Him, He also calls believers today to contribute to His work. When we choose to respond to His call with humility and faith, we can be contributors!

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. Jn 15:16

Reflect

What are some steps you can take to deepen your appreciation of God's grace as you serve Him?

The FAST qualities of a contributor

God's grace is not a license for careless living. When we experience God's grace, we reasonably respond with gratitude. Out of gratitude, we want to serve God not just with the right skills but also the right character.

God is primarily concerned with who we are, not what we do. The Bible speaks of believers as new creations who will slowly but surely grow "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom 8:29). When we place Christ at the centre of our lives, we will naturally become more like Him.

Now that we are Christ followers and God's people, we need to stop our sinful lifestyles and strive to live to honour God (Col 3:1-14). Knowing that we cannot accomplish this on our own, God has sent His Holy Spirit to sanctify us and empower us to live for Him (Rom 8:1-17).

At Hope Church, we take the character of contributors very seriously. We aim to help contributors develop four essential qualities represented by the acronym FAST - Faithfulness, Availability, Submissiveness and Teachability.

1) Faithfulness

To be faithful is to make the most of the service opportunities God entrusts to us. When He calls us to a ministry or a work where He wants us to contribute, we are faithful when we answer with a "Yes God, I'll do it!" Though we may have doubts and fears, we respond with a can-do spirit, trusting that God will empower us for what He has called us to do.

The parable of the talents

Jesus taught about the faithfulness of God's servants in the parable of the talents (Mat 25:14-30). Two servants do their best to make the most of the talents their master had entrusted to them. However, the third servant buries the money. The master gives the same praise ("Well done, good and faithful servant!") to the two servants who have different abilities and achievements (Mat 25:21; 23). This shows that God looks beyond the outcome of our labour to the faithfulness of our hearts.

Making the most of what we have

Faithfulness is not about skills or results, but our readiness to steward well the opportunities that God has entrusted to us.

Jesus will return for us someday. We do not wait passively for His return but actively prepare for it by serving God with all that we have. God has given each of us abilities, passions, life experiences and resources. Some of us may seem more influential and talented or have more resources than others, but all of us have something to faithfully serve God with.

Instead of squandering God-given opportunities to serve, we diligently make the most of them. Instead of comparing our abilities and achievements with that of others, we focus on honouring God with all that we have, knowing that He is pleased when we have done our best.

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ *Mat 25:21, 23*

Reflect

How are you being faithful today? What may hinder you from being faithful? In what ways can you grow in faithfulness?

2) Availability

To be available is to offer our inner life, abilities, time, experiences and resources to God and allow Him to use them for His purpose.

The commissioning of Isaiah

Isaiah was commissioned by God to serve during a time of national unrest in Israel. The death of King Uzziah plunged the nation into a state of fearful uncertainty about their future, with their powerful enemy, Assyria, on the rise. In Isaiah’s vision, he was so awed by the holiness of God that he declared his sin in shame and despair. Graciously, God forgave Isaiah. In response, Isaiah availed himself to serve God (Isa 6:1-8). God gave Isaiah the challenging mission of proclaiming His truth to a sinful nation on the brink of judgment and destruction (Isa 6:9-13).

Availing ourselves humbly

We serve the Holy God with reverence. Isaiah’s story shows that our service starts with the recognition of our inadequacies and God’s grace for us. Instead of taking pride in our strength and abilities, we humbly acknowledge our weaknesses and repent of our sins. This means that we avail our inner life to God, allowing Him to sanctify us.

Availing ourselves wholeheartedly

Isaiah confidently answered God’s call even before he knew what the task would entail. Like Isaiah, we ought to serve the King of Kings with a bold offering of ourselves. Instead of being transactional in our service to God, we avail ourselves wholeheartedly because God is worthy of our all. This means that we are willing to be inconvenienced and disrupted. We are willing to realign our priorities so that we can serve God, even at a short notice. Instead of fearing that we will lose out, we contribute with confidence that God will provide for our needs. This means that we willingly avail resources such as our time and finances to God.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”
And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” *Isa 6:8*

Reflect

Is there ever a “right” time to serve God? Servants of God throughout history persevered in their service despite setbacks and opposition. Similarly, God may call us to contribute at a time when circumstances are unpleasant and tasks are difficult. In fact, that may be the very reason why God wants us to serve!

3) Submission

To submit is to respect, give in to or back down in favour of the other party. We may not fully understand or agree, but we choose to respect and follow our leaders because we trust that God is ultimately in control.

Submission begins with trust

Instead of relying on our imperfect and limited understanding, we trust God that He will reveal to us the right path when we submit to Him (Prov 3:5-6). The first key to knowing the direction we should go is not information or agreement, but trust.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight. *Prov 3:5-6*

Often, serving God involves submitting to our leaders whether in agreements or disagreements, so that they will have joy leading us.

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. *Heb 13:17*

The struggle to submit

Some of us may have had bad experiences with authority figures. We may have heard or witnessed firsthand how parents, teachers, bosses or other leaders abused their authority and took advantage of those they were leading. These figures in authority will have to give an account to God for what they have done. Yet the choice of some to abuse their authority does not mean that authority in itself is wrong. God Himself establishes authority for His purposes (Rom 13:1-2).

When there is a lack of information or clash of views, we may raise our doubts respectfully and find the right platform and time to ask questions and seek to understand. When the final decision is made, we support it as a united body of Christ. At the very least, we do not attack the decision (or decision makers) as that may lead to more conflicts and misunderstandings within the family of God.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Eph 4:3

Reflect

Why do you think people struggle to submit? Identify scenarios where you may find it difficult to submit to God and/or leaders. What are some steps you can take to grow in submission in these areas?

4) Teachability

To be teachable is to actively learn from God and leaders as we serve. When we are teachable, we will grow in attitude, skills and knowledge as we contribute to God's work.

Learn from leaders

We can learn from leaders in how they live out God's truth in areas of ministry, family, relationships, career, studies, and finances. By observing the lives of our leaders and proactively asking questions, we can glean biblical principles for decision-making. It is a blessing to have more mature Christians to help us grow in our discipleship journey!

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Heb 13:7

Learn through discipline

We are tested in our teachability when we experience criticism or stinging feedback about our service. Yet these unpleasant moments are prime opportunities for us to learn how to be and do better. Many times we learn best through discipline and correction (Prov 15:32). Instead of losing heart and giving up, we learn from our mistakes and carefully change our ways to become more like Christ.

**Those who disregard discipline despise themselves,
but the one who heeds correction gains understanding. Prov 15:32**

Learn using resources

Being teachable may include consulting resources (books, videos, articles etc.) beneficial for one's development, and attending classes to improve one's skills and deepen one's appreciation of Christ and the Gospel.

Reflect

What is your main hindrance to being teachable? How can you guard against it? What is one thing you want to learn as you contribute? How can you go about learning it, or who can you learn it from?

SESSION 3: OUR JOURNEY AS A CONTRIBUTOR

Introduction

Christianity is not a one man show. We contribute to God's work not as an individual alone, but with God and with one another.

1) Contribute with God

We do not just serve God – we serve with Him by His power. Paul writes in his letter to the church in Ephesus:

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Eph 3:7

Our service is not limited by our own strength and wisdom. Though we may not have the best ideas or most efficient methods, we can continue to serve, because we have God's powerful grace in our lives. We can keep our zeal, even prevent burnout, because we rely on the power of God's grace.

God's grace can also come in the form of spiritual gifts ('things of grace') from the Holy Spirit. In a letter to the Corinthian church, Paul writes of the Holy Spirit's gifts to the church, given to individuals to serve the church.

There are different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. 1 Cor 12:4-6

We cannot earn spiritual gifts because God makes them available purely by His grace, nor can we own them. We can only avail ourselves to the Holy Spirit to be used by Him. We are fully reliant on the Holy Spirit who determines the spiritual gifts we serve God with.

Since we have access to spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit, take time to acknowledge and give thanks to God who enables us. In times of need, take time to pray and to seek Him for wisdom and strength to serve.

Reflect

How does knowing that you are serving *with* God affect the way you contribute? Let's not serve apart from God who gives us strength. Pray and commit the outcome to God as we remain faithful in our labour.

2) Contribute with people

The journey of contribution will bring us alongside many other fellow contributors. As we interact, we get to know our brothers and sisters. Take time to grow in Christ together and learn from one another. Though we are unique individuals, we are all servants of Christ, bound by a common love for God and His Church.

At times, we may be misled to think that some forms of service may be more important or superior to others. This subtle form of pride affects our inner attitudes and outward actions. We may glorify 'glamorous' ministries or think ourselves 'too good' to serve in 'less important' capacities.

Such responses damage the unity of the Church. If we esteem some ministries yet look down on others, we are doing more harm than good. Paul taught the Corinthian church the importance of honouring every servant of Christ,

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body ... God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. 1 Cor 12:12-26

A body cannot function without its parts. The eyes cannot be replaced by fingers, nor the mouth by ears. Every part is important, regardless of how insignificant it seems. Every contributor, every form of service, is important to God. As we serve in God's church, let us honour one another in every form of contribution.

Conclusion

The journey of the contributor does

not end with a change of life station or the completion of a project. When we truly and continually experience the grace of God, we will make the most of every opportunity to contribute.

As we serve and contribute to God's work, we can expect to go through many experiences. There will be celebrations when our efforts bear fruit that honours God and His Church. Conversely, there will be disappointments when we do not get the outcomes we expected. Yet God can use each of these experiences to shape us and grow our character.

We can also trust that through our efforts, God will eventually grow the church. This means that we can confidently give our best to God, being assured that our labour will not be in vain. This also means that while we take ownership of our service to God, we should not become proud and think that we have achieved the results by our own strength and wisdom. The truth is that only God can bring about the fruits of our ministry.

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. *1 Cor 3:6-9*

As you set forth on your journey of contribution today, remember to always look to the perfect role model we have in Christ!

Jesus washed His disciples' feet, serving them. Jesus gave up His life to pay for our sins. May His humble and selfless love for us encourage us to contribute sacrificially to further the Gospel!

APPENDIX: AREAS TO CONTRIBUTE

Opportunities in Life Group

1. Chairing

The chairperson manages the atmosphere and the effective flow of the Life Group program. He or she:

- Welcomes the visitors (they can play games to create such atmosphere)
- Conducts Holy Communion and offering
- Ensures Life Group runs smoothly and promptly

Life groups are moments where our members and friends can encounter God. Therefore, it is necessary for the chairperson to be prepared both spiritually and practically.

Tips:

- Pray for sensitivity to the Holy Spirit
- Pray for a joyful heart
- Be flexible in programming
- Ensure a smooth flow from one segment to another
- Clear in communication

2. Games Leading

The purpose is to open people's heart. It is a time to allow people to settle down as they take their attention off the busyness or the tiredness and just let their hair down to have fun.

Tips:

- The game leader should understand and plan the activity with consideration of the crowd maturity, personal comfort space and the theme of the Life Group.
- Avoid making the crowd feel uncomfortable by getting them to participate in something if majority perceive it as inappropriate or awkward.

3. Testimony Facilitator

The purpose is to encourage and remind each other of God's goodness.

Tips:

- Prepare and find out who in the group has testimony to share
- Keep the atmosphere faith-filled

- Use an activity to facilitate the time of testimony sharing

4. Worship Leading

The worship leader needs to be able to “open” the hearts of the people with praise to God and “pour-in” feelings of warmth and love with the worship. Also, bear in mind that the atmosphere of praise and worship in the Life Group is considerably different from that of worship services (congregational settings versus small group settings). Therefore, do not “force” the atmosphere to be like that of the services and also avoid songs that are musically challenging for you and the musician. The main objective of worship in Life Group is to acknowledge the presence of God.

Tips:

- Atmosphere should be light-hearted and ministering
- Visitor-friendly and relevant
- Smooth flowing (without long preaching in between)

5. Discussion Leading

This is to exchange opinions and learning; it is not enforcing biblical truths on people. Through the exchange, people are led to understand the right biblical principles. The discussion leader needs to know what the desired practical response of the people is. This is to help the leader in preparing the teaching points.

Tips:

- Create an atmosphere of openness in sharing and acceptance of each one’s differences.
- Aim to see people exchange their viewpoints openly and respond practically to the truth.
- Use actual life scenarios in discussing biblical truths to bring the truth closer to reality.

6. Holy Communion Leading

The purpose is to remember the death and life of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:23-30). It is important that the leader allow personal response towards God and not to over-lead. The success indicators are people renewing their relationship with God through repentance and people filled with faith and hope at the end of communion.

To sign up for Life Group roles, speak to your Life Group Leader or your Mentor today.

Opportunities in Church Ministries

Types of Ministry

- Life Group Operations – They supports the administration and growth of the Life Groups in church.
- Events Operations – They run various events and create excellent service experiences relevant to pre-believers.
- Office Operations – They support and ensure smooth operations of the church.
- Community – They volunteer with Hope Centre to bless the greater community.

Tips to how to choose a ministry

1. What are my skills today?

If you have a specific passion, skill, experience or ability required by a ministry, then it can be something you start contributing towards today!

2. Am I able to perform the task required? Or am I willing to learn and attend trainings provided?

Some of us might be very confident of the task we are given or the area we are contributing in. But some of us may not and this is normal. When we are new in the ministry, have an open heart to learn from others, put in effort to attend trainings (if there are any) and always ask questions.

3. Am I available on the ministry dates?

When we sign up for a ministry, besides being competent, one of the important criteria is being available. Some ministry requires you to be available on weekends for duties during service while other ministry may require you to spend time working on a project after school or work hours. Others may be ad-hoc.

When you choose a ministry, pick one that you can avail your time so that you can give your best to the duties entrusted to you.

4. Is there a gap to fill?

Not all the time we choose a role to join depending on our competence and availability. Sometimes we need to consider the need. For example, if there is no one who can contribute in the role of a Testimony facilitator in the Life Group, will you be willing to fill the gap and contribute in the role?

Similarly, if there is a need for more volunteers in a particular church ministry. Will you be willing to consider contributing in that ministry?

How to sign up to contribute in church ministries?

To sign up, you can either speak to your Life Group leader or to go to <http://hopesingapore.org.sg/roles-available/>

APPENDIX: FAQ

- 1) **If I do not have time and energy to serve in ministries because of other commitments, how can I still contribute?**

Part of being a contributor is to be available with our time, abilities and resources. If you believe that God has called you to contribute in building the church, ask Him for wisdom to realign your priorities and for strength to serve Him.

However, if you have pressing matters to take care of at this point in time, ask God for wisdom and strength too to handle them. God is not confined to a ministry. We can still serve and glorify Him in other ways. In any case, we should contribute to God's work wherever, whenever and however we can.

- 2) **Which is more important when deciding my ministry - passion, abilities or spiritual gifts? Why?**

When we avail ourselves for service God will graciously empower us with spiritual gifts. In that light, perhaps we can first ask God: "What ministry do You want me to contribute in? What is an area in the church that I feel the most passion and burden for?"

Sometimes we will be able to use our natural strengths in a ministry, sometimes we will not. Sometimes after serving in a ministry for a while, we may realise that we are better suited elsewhere. Choosing your ministry is part of your unique journey as a contributor. Walk through it with God and leaders who can advise you in your decision making.

- 3) **What if I think my leader is making wrong decisions? What can I do?**

There are several ways to handle the situation, depending on the severity of the wrong and the depth of the relationship. Is the 'wrong' decision a matter of sin or differences in opinion?

If you and your leader share a close working relationship or friendship, you may want to choose an appropriate time and platform to ask your leader about it. This may mean approaching the leader on your own during a time when both are able to talk at length about the issue. The objective is to understand each other's rationale and address concerns.

If the decision is a severe wrong that needs to be addressed immediately, you may want to talk about it soon after with your leader. If there is no resolution after talking, it may be time to bring in another leader as a mediator.

In any case, do your best to maintain the unity of the church.

4) **If I'm asked to serve in a ministry that I'm not interested in, how can I respond?**

If we truly believe that it is an honour and privilege to serve God, we will make the most of every opportunity to contribute. This does not mean that we serve till we drop, but that we humble ourselves to offer our service when it is needed of us.