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- 00:04 Hey there. My name is Chris Rivers, and I want to thank you for joining us for the Why Behind Discipleship podcast. The goal of this resource is to address discipleship issues in the life of Grace Church and discuss how to be more fully loaded to God. In this episode, Scott Mosingo and I chat with Leanne Cavan, who serves as Grace Church's Care and Recovery Director and executive housing director.
- 00:25 Be sure to check out our podcast page at gracechurchsc.org/whydiscipleship. On this page, you can access a summary of each episode and additional resources to help you move towards discipleship. Okay, let's jump into this episode. Well, Leanne, we're glad to have you today and talking about why serving is a discipleship issue. So before we get started, why don't you tell us a little bit about your role here? Thanks, Chris. I've been on staff for about 11-12 years.
- 00:55 I am currently in the role of our care and recovery Ministry director. That includes items like divorce, care, grief, share, region, mosaic, and recently, housing. All that experience is what we wanted to tap into today when you and I were talking offline about issues that have shaped the culture of our Church, things that are really meaningful, that are easy also to take for granted, but things that we can't afford to take for granted because it is part of at the very core of who we are called to be as an organization, as a Church, as a local body.
- 01:30 There are a lot of things you could have talked about, but the first thing you jumped on, you said, I want to talk about serving, and I'm so excited to have this conversation. Let's do two things at the onset. Just kind of define what serving is and then tell us what role serving has really played in your faith journey. To me, serving is giving your life away. Now that could look many different ways, and so it could be a specific serving role, but I think it's also an orientation of the heart and how you go about life in general.
- 02:03 I think serving has a vertical and a horizontal component, so I serve because of what the Lord has done for me and how Christ served me first. But then serving requires another individual. So I guess I could just serve myself. So I guess it doesn't require it. But to really be serving in a way that Jesus modeled, there's someone else. And so that is me serving, lifting up, caring, serving for somebody else, laying my life down to care for others.
- 02:31 I think sometimes we have compartmentalized serving down to a specific role or event, and I think that's where we get into trouble. To me, it is much broader than a serving role or this idea of I serve at

Church or I serve on our swim team board, so I check the box or I have to go do baseball concessions. This is part of how I serve at Little League. And so this is what I do. But I think that idea is very narrow, and that's where we get into some trouble, because serving for me has been life changing and life altering.

03:03 Yeah. Tell us a little bit about the kind of growing up Church, how you viewed serving, how that changed over the years? Well, growing up, we were always in Church. If the door was open, we were there, but we were very much consumer. It was something that we did. And the discipline of going to Church was always a part of life. But in my life, I actually did not see the impacts of Sunday and Wednesday beyond those events. I would say we have a Christian values home, but we did not have a Christ following home.

03:35 And so that puts some discord in my experience. Then when we got married and after Mac was born, he was six months old, we started looking for churches here in Greenville. The very first Church we went to was a very established Church. And it was great because I came and I handed my son to nursery volunteer, and the same nursery volunteer handed him back to me after he had slept with her on her shoulder in the rocking chair the entire service. And I was thrilled. As a young mom, that was all I wanted.

04:03 Then the next week we visited Grace, and at that point in time, there were 70, 80 people. We came in. I had that same sweet six month old son that nobody else was really taking care of outside of family. And we walked in and the nursery was in a hallway. The nursery was not really what we would call a nursery, but it was a location to drop your kids. We did. And I was very uncomfortable. I gave my son to a man, which I had not done before, and it wasn't a very comfortable environment.

04:33 So we went to service or went to the worship service because my husband told me we had to we left. We left back there. We went in her teaching like we had never heard before and came back. I share that because right after that I got involved in serving in the nursery because I wanted to know who had my kid. Yeah, you want to know who that man was? It was odd to me. There was a big man taking my kid, and now he's still here. One of the sweet things that was the Anderson. That was Charlie Anderson and still serving in our Church and has had my kids a couple of different times throughout children's Ministry in their life.

05:04 So very grateful for him. But at the onset, I had no idea who he was, why he would be back there, and who else was going to be taking care. And it was obvious they needed us. So Wes quickly got plugged into the worship team. He was on drums within a couple of weeks at best, and I was serving on the rotation back in the nursery, and that hooked us. We were back and we would come back week after week because we had a responsibility. At that point, it was more about being needed than really the motivation of anything else is that I was needed.

05:38 I needed to feel that responsibility, and so I would keep coming. And it brought us back into Church and took us away from College

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football games and weekends spent traveling the team because we had a responsibility and we had some place to be. And there were people on the other end of those responsibilities that you were serving and caring for. At that point, I didn't really care about them, if I'm honest. I was just trying to make sure I was doing what I was supposed to do. I had a high level of responsibility, and I did like being needed, so it fed an idle.

06:08 It took me a while to actually learn to care about the people I was serving. How did that change for you? I think that came later, probably when I had more of a women's Ministry role because I was diving into Scripture in a new way. As I said, I had grown up in Church. It was something that we did, but it didn't really impact our daily life. I started serving with the women's Ministry team, really to bring my organizational skill to the team and enjoyed that.

06:38 But they started the meetings with, what is God teaching you? Well, we all sat in the same service on Sunday. Right now he's teaching us. Ruth, what's the question? It's like I didn't understand this idea of self feeding and being in the Scriptures and expecting God to do something. And so I had to start reading so that I'd have an answer the next time it came around. And I started loving, really reading Scripture for myself, not just what I was being taught.

07:07 And then it started to make sense. All of one another's, a Scripture caring for one another, bearing one another's burdens. All of that came to life, and I started caring about those that I was serving. It was no longer serving. You began caring about began to understand that. So I think that was the big piece for me that flipped a switch. So I think that's so helpful thinking about how Scripture becomes alive when you're putting it into application. It's basically what you're talking about.

07:34 Can you think about some other scriptures that were really fundamental in changing your view from that self orientation towards that orientation to others? As I studied prior, it was really knowledge base. It was kind of flat because I wasn't needing to apply it. And as I started reading, especially in the New Testament, Paul's letters started to make a lot of sense to me in ways they had not prior. When I specifically think of Colossians, there's a spot I think it's in chapter one, verses 28 and 29.

08:06 So we tell others about Christ warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God perfect in their relationship to Christ. That is why I work and struggle so hard depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me. And there was something about that that struck me as not only the motivation but also Paul saying, It's hard and it's struggle. I think so often when I was recruited to serving roles or people are talking about it, they were like, this is easy.

08:36 And all we need you to do is to serve on this spot for an hour a week. It'll be an easy thing to do. You can do this. And what I found was denying myself going when I didn't want to go. I spent seven years in the nursery, in the baby nursery. So when services would go long and parents weren't picking up quickly because they had a conversation

after a long service, my temptation would easily be, Come get this kid.

- 09:06 I'm tired of your child's crying, this is difficult and then realizing, no, it's supposed to be. I'm caring for this child. I'm caring for this family. They need to connect. And serving isn't easy. The Christian life isn't easy. Thinking about how many times we start a sentence with all you need to do is. And when we leave that way, we're really gutting a big part of what God's intention is for serving, which is to force us into self denial as opposed to self fulfillment.
- 09:38 And I think your story begins to explain a real practical example of how that works for a lot of us. Yeah. And I think we all start somewhere, right. And so we may start in a place that's easy or a spot that really isn't motivated out of love. It really is our own fulfillment. Hey, I'm really gifted in fill the blank. And so I really administration. Yeah. So I just want to do that. But there might be a need somewhere else and being able to recognize, okay, I actually need to meet this need.
- 10:09 I'm capable. I may not be gifted. I may not find it easy. I think often using our gifts, which are for the body, it is often easy to me that's a difference in serving. Serving is laying down my life for somewhere else. That's not easy. I want to preserve my life. I want to preserve my comfort. So I think when we are recruiting, when we have a role, the worst thing to say is we just need. I don't want the word just because if anyone can do it, then go find anyone. Leave me out of it.
- 10:39 I want an opportunity to do something unique. I want an opportunity to really be a part of something bigger. And I think we all do. We're created to be a part of something bigger. And then I think the other thing that we do often is we don't release and call people into serving. When we find our niche and we feel really good about what we're doing, we start to find fulfillment in it. And releasing and calling somebody else to it can be difficult. And so I think leaders make that mistake also, and it robs them of an opportunity. Right.
- 11:08 It's selfish to not invite people in. And I think what you're touching on there is the difference between discipleship, which is where we are growing in how we follow, trust, depend on Jesus and become more like Jesus and just fill a role, quote unquote volunteer like you talked about with the Little League or the PTA. So we just plug in a role, meet a need, and there's nothing really transcendent about it. It's a checkbox.
- 11:36 But with serving, we're talking about something that is critical to our walk with Christ, critical to becoming fully formed into the image of Christ. And so that's why we wanted to talk about why this is such an important discipleship issue that grows your devotion to God. Let's talk about thoughts on why now, why this is such an important topic for us as a Church. For us as a Church, there are two components that I think of initially.
- 12:03 One, we are in a place where God has given us a number of resources, and it is quite humbling to see there's a temptation that comes with that, that we can outsource, especially we can outsource

the things that maybe we don't like to do that aren't as fulfilling. Can you give some examples to that? Yeah. For one, to me is childcare. We have the ability to pay for childcare workers, and I think that's great and we need it. I remember being that young mom, but I think there's also an opportunity for me now to be in a different season and to go, you know what?

12:36

I do remember what that was like. Why don't I come serve and I'll cover so parents can go to reengage and that we not outsource and just pay for everything that can be done or flipping rooms in between the services or events. I still really enjoy the pack in, pack out. I haven't done it for a while, so I can enjoy something in reflection, but there was something to that side by side. And I'd have conversations with people that would only happen in that environment because we're both literally moving chairs and you get to just have a conversation that wouldn't naturally strike up any other time.

13:12

I think the other thing about why now coming out of COVID, it has been really interesting to me to watch volunteer teams come back, which teams come back quickly and which ones do not. And so I think it is revealed and it's given us a gift of awareness that we did not have prior. Many of us were just doing routine there's, not just, again, we were working through because it was in our schedule. It wasn't necessarily intentional.

13:41

I think we were guilty of adjusting serving roles to be easy to fit in schedules without asking folks to deny their own preferences as much. It's one of the things that I think helped us grow so much was really going we can't be at every Carolina game. We can't travel and do what we need to do. As our kids aged, there were times that we would send back with another family to a baseball tournament because we had the priority of being here.

14:12

And I think our family grew from that. I know we grew from that. And so as we've come out of COVID, we're seeing serving roles that were easy to fit in your schedule are also easy to leave out of your schedule. And so if we were on a convenient rotation, a lot of those volunteers didn't come back. It wasn't purposeful. It wasn't something that was as meaningful because it just kind of fit. One of the things that I noticed, our Mosaic volunteers were back as soon as the doors open.

14:42

I think they signed up to do something that would be hard. They knew it, but they were bought in. They wanted to be there. They want to serve the families. They want to serve the individual. And they came back as soon as we opened the doors. So I think it has helped us reveal our own hearts. And what is our motivation for serving? Am I serving because I'm supposed to, or am I serving because I want to? I serve because this is what the Lord did for me. So what's the danger of pursuing too much comfort in a serving role?

15:13

Well, I think when we start finding comfort in these different roles, we exchange that for Christ's comfort? Yes. We don't even have to have his comfort, right? I don't need it because this is easy. It's the hardship that you have to lean on him to say, I need your comfort

because this is difficult. And I don't think all serving has to be painful. I'm not trying to turn us into these major murders, but I think we have to prioritize it. It needs to be an intentional part of our life. It needs to be sacrificial.

15:42 And it gives us that opportunity to realize, oh, I'm valuing myself over someone else. I don't want to go today because it's raining. I don't want to stand outside in the rain. I mean, I love that our parking team does all that they do in the rain. I love that I pull up and I'm like, okay, I feel cared for. I feel seen. That's a great gift, which they could have easily called out because of the rain. And at the end of it, I think that that will be a time that they look back and be able to see the way that they laid it down for somebody else.

16:11 And I got here an hour early to set up. We don't have an awful lot of opportunities to lay it down. Right. And this is an entry gate, like you said, for something to go from being very static to very dynamic, from the outlook that's oriented towards the self to an outlook oriented to others. And it doesn't happen right away. But you got to get started, you got to get involved, and it can change over time, and you can have a lot of motivation and hard change over time, but you've got to get involved, you got to get going in order to make that happen.

16:45 I don't even learn what you're good at, right? That's right. I had no idea there were some things that I actually could do. I started entering an Excel because that's what I like to do. So that was something easy. I started with the nursery because there was a need. But I've learned through these different opportunities and serving roles and feedback being given from others that I do have some other ways to serve and to give. And so I've learned stuff about myself through that I would not have learned otherwise there wouldn't have been an opportunity.

17:14 And that's one reason why we want to have a multi congregation model is because when you split things off and make things smaller and make things more local, you need more hands, you need more people. You need folks doing things that they're not as familiar with or they don't know how to do. And serving one another, go back to those one another I talked about in the context of the local Church for a transcendent purpose is a great place to do that.

17:41 Let's talk a little bit about the tension between serving and leading, and where does our leadership need to have these serving principles always baked into them? The different serving opportunities bring out your different skills and your gifts. And that's when I would have never thought I had any leadership. I really prefer the background. I always wanted food at events because it gave me something to talk to the next person about because I'm not really good at stirring conversation.

18:10 And so serving helps give those opportunities. And you often over time, begin leading. So if you've done something for a long time, you end up having more responsibility, you end up leading. I think if our leaders look at leading as an end itself, I'm a leader now. I don't

serve a lead. That's a poor outlook, because again, you're back to yourself in this accomplished spot.

18:39

A good leader serves others. Any power that we have should be power for others good, not our own. And so I think in these different roles where we are leading, we need to have an orientation to serve those that we are leading, to care for them, to live out those one another, and to make sure that we are also sacrificing. For some of us, leading is sacrificing, right? It's not something we even enjoy doing by any means.

19:09

So it's not an end. It's not an end. And so that's the piece of that self reflection and allowing the Holy Spirit to go, okay, again, you're sliding into comfort. You're good at this. This is easy. You need to go do something else. Our leaders need to recognize. Are they modeling or are we prescribing? So if I'm saying this is what a spiritual life looks like, this is what you should do. Scripture says, follow me as I follow Christ. So it should be me doing all of these things.

19:38

And if I'm leading you in some way, it's being modeled for you, it's not being prescribed. And so I think the other thing for our staff is we are charged with leading ministries that we remember first, we are serving the Lord, not filling boxes. But if we start looking at our members as ways to complete our Ministry or fill boxes, have a hole here.

20:05

Recruiting to a whole is a terrible way because again, you've missed the heart of serving. You've missed the discipleship opportunity. You can meet with that person, find out what they are good at, find out what they're passionate about, find out their weaknesses. Sometimes you actually want to use their weakness and say, hey, this is a spot that we can grow. Let's try this and I'll walk with you. Let's do this. And so it's not a matter of just filling boxes and making things happen, but it's drawing people closer to Christ through their serving.

20:37

Yeah, placing people in roles is very different than developing them to be more devoted followers of Jesus. And one is definitely easier than the other. But it goes back to do I have a posture your very definition of serving? Am I humble before God? And am I serving him because of what he's done in my life? And because of that, I have an obedience. I have an obligation to love and serve others. And the way that I do that is actually through serving, not for my own self fulfillment, but for the good of others, for the glory of God and for the building up of his Kingdom.

21:12

And it's just so interesting to me how we take good things and we turn them and can corrupt them, which is just the story of creation. And so I love that idea. Behind are we modeling or are we prescribing? This has been greatly. Anne, is there anything else that you would want to add as we close? I think if we look to see the way Jesus served, it's really hard to look at the cross and then say it doesn't fit.

21:41

I can't do that this week because we have this event going on. He laid it down, and I don't think we will get to the end of life and regret

serving another person that's been a pushback that we've experienced with kids growing up and having events and understanding the busyness of life. Let us travel ball and all those things but I know that that formed our family. It also formed our kids getting in the car and saying, hey, you got to be ready to go and you being late is now impacting all of these people.

22:14

This isn't just about you get your shoes on, let's go. And both by God's Grace, both of our kids are here and they're serving. They don't despise the Church and I'm so grateful for that. But I think they learned the value of the Church. They learned the community that is there for them through serving and being a part so good. Thank you so much for sharing and being here with us. I've gotten a lot of this. So appreciate it. Absolutely. Thanks for having me.

22:44

Well, as we wrap up today's conversation, we want to thank you for joining us. Be sure to subscribe to your favorite podcasting channel so you can be updated with each new episode. If you know someone who would benefit from hearing this, please consider sharing it with them. And if you have questions or want access to any additional resources to help you dive deeper into this subject, be sure to check out our podcast page at gracechurchsc.org. Orgwydisposhift.

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If we can help you answer any questions about this episode or want us to discuss something in a future episode, email us at ydispolskip@gracechurchsc.org hey, thanks for joining us today and we look forward to joining you on the next episode.