

With their rebellion forgiven, Israel is finally given the task of constructing a tabernacle for the Lord, a tent of meeting which He would reveal His presence. When the task was completed, the Lord would descend upon the tabernacle and fill it with His glory, indicating as well His acceptance of their work. In contrast to their former idolatry, their service in building the tabernacle was God-centered. Three characteristics of such God-centered serving stand out at the start of their task.

I. *They served within the framework of the covenant relation with the Lord (35:1–3).*

1. The Sabbath regulation at the start of this section should be seen in light of its previous statement in 31:15–17. It was a sign of their covenant relation to the Lord and should determine how their work was to proceed. Their work on the Tabernacle was for the Lord, at the Lord’s command, in the Lord’s way. Their work had to be God-centered.
2. Believers today, under the covenant of grace, should be equally God-centered in their serving.
 - a. Believers serve by grace and under grace. Serving does not earn salvation (Ephesians 2:8–9). The believer is a new creature, created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Ephesians 2:10).
 - b. Service can never be more important than righteousness.

Service to God must be God-centered, and God-centered serving must be in the framework of His covenant with us.

II. *They served in willing generosity offered to the Lord (35:4–29; 36:3b–7).*

1. Two words or phrases, “for the Lord” and “willing,” further define God-centered service as willing generosity offered to the Lord.
 - a. “For the Lord” (35:5, 21, 22, 24, 29) is in contrast to their former idolatry and emphasizes God-centered serving.
 - b. “Willing” (35:5ff or “generous” -ESV) describes how they were inwardly motivated to give and work (35:21; 36:2), and as well their abundant generosity (36:3–7).

The serving was God-centered, because it was a willing generosity offered to the Lord.

2. Believers today should also serve the Lord in all that they do with willing hearts.
 - a. All God-centered serving is an offering, pleasing to God (Philippians 4:18; Colossians 3:17).
 - b. All activity should be approached as God-centered serving (Colossians 3:17, 22–25).
 - c. Serving beyond duty should be willing and motivated by Christ’s service to us (2 Corinthians 8–9, especially 8:1–5, 9–12; 9:10–11).

Serving, to be service to God, must be God-centered and will be characterized by a willing generosity offered to the Lord.

III. *They served with the enablement of the Lord (35:30–36:3a).*

1. The Israelites served in the building of the tabernacle by God’s enablement, explicitly in the enabling of the workers (Exodus 35:30–36:1) and implicitly in their contributions which they had probably obtained when God enabled them to “plunder” Egypt (Exodus 3:22; 12:36).
The Exodus record acknowledges that their serving was grounded in the Lord’s provision. It was God-centered serving.
2. Believers today are enabled by God to serve Him and only by His enablement.
 - a. All that believers have, possessions and abilities, are from God (1 Corinthians 4:7; 12:11). God enabled service should be God-centered.
 - b. Believers should give credit to God for His enablement (cf. Philippians 4:13).

God-centered serving recognizes that the Lord enables His children to serve. They are responsible to be good stewards of these things.

Israel’s service in preparation for the presence of the Lord was all to be about God: understanding the covenant of the Lord, serving with willing generosity to the Lord, serving as the Lord enabled them. Believers today, who are under the new covenant, should that much more serve with new motivation, new perspective, new goals. Their lives should embody God-centered serving.

Keep perspective. Stay humble. Whatever you do, do heartily as to the Lord. In all that you do, be consciously serving the Lord as His child, with His gifts, for His glory.

Questions for prayerful reflection and discussion:

- To what degree can you honestly describe your activities at home, work or school as God-centered? How can you improve in this area?
- What are your “assets”, i.e., possessions and abilities? Are you giving credit to God by thanking Him? How might you serve God with them?
- Are there limits to generosity?
- How can we encourage one another to be more God-centered in our serving?