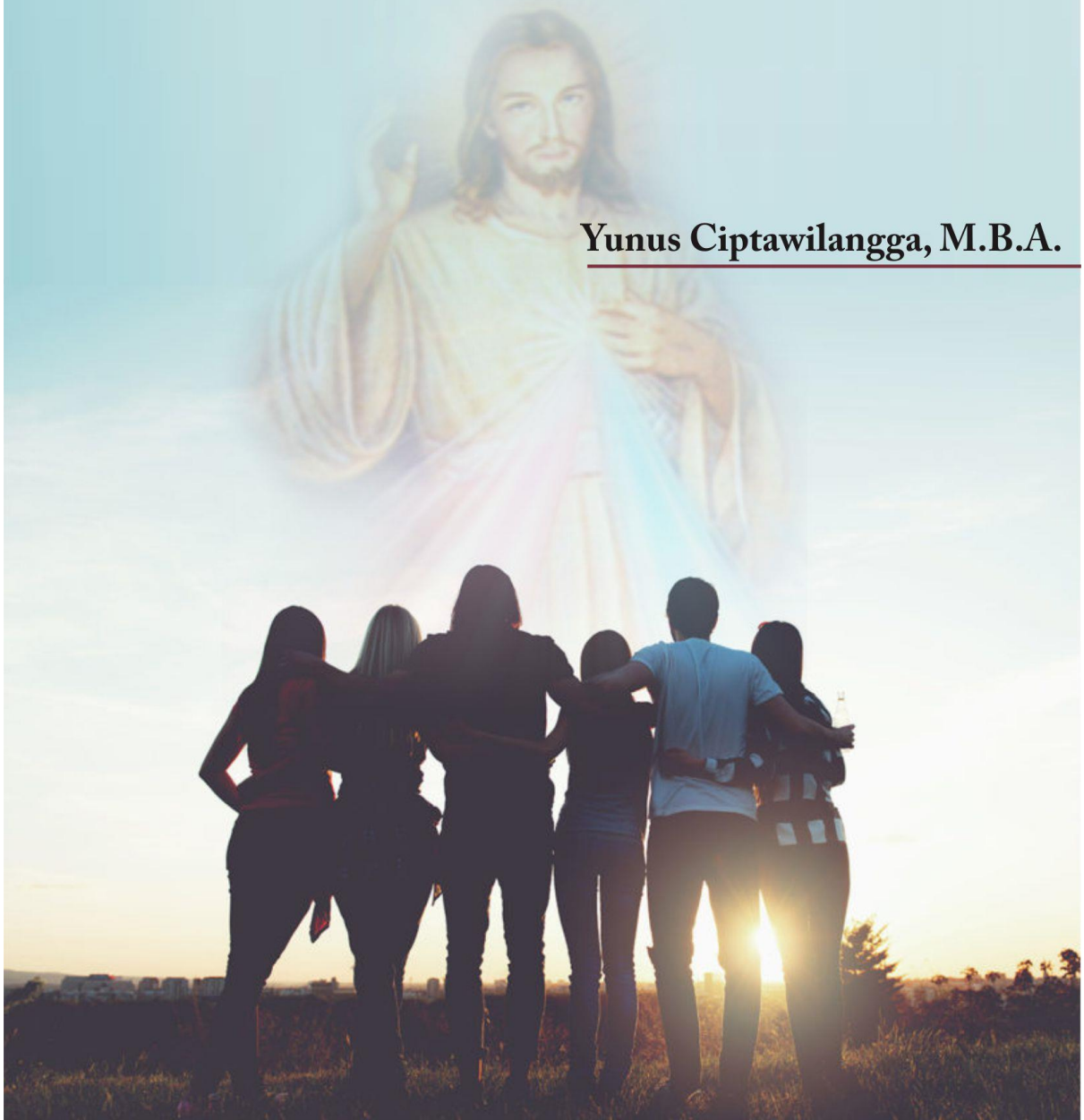


# TO BE CHILDREN OF GOD OR SERVANTS OF GOD?

Yunus Ciptawilangga, M.B.A.



## TO BE CHILDREN OF GOD

OR

## SERVANTS OF GOD

Recently, there is a popular Christian song:

*This life on earth is provided with chances*

*This life giv'n us is meant to serve God our Creator*

*Don't waste what the LORD GOD has bestowed on us*

*This life should be(come) a blessing for others*

*Please, dear Lord, use my life for Your glory*

*While I 'm still strong and in good health*

*And when the time comes, one sure day*

*That my strength would fail me, Lord*

*My life on earth then has been a blessing*

***(This Life Is Meant to Serve God -- Free translation)***

This song shows a principle that our lives should be used to serve God. The concept that God's greatest desire for us is to serve Him is not something new. Many hold to this principle, among others Pastor Rick Warren. In his book entitled *The Purpose Driven Life*, he started with a question, "*What on earth am I here*

*for?"* God created us for a certain definite purpose. What was His purpose? The purpose was to glorify God by serving Him. This book offers various ways how to serve God.

Likewise Max Lucado in his book *"Cure for the Common Life"* describes that many people want to serve God, but they do not know how, or what to do. Then Max Lucado stated, *"If we want to serve God, discover our talents and use them to serve God."*

Yet, is it true that God's greatest desire is for us to serve Him?

### **Neither A Levite Nor A Priest**

Before the writer explains any further, it is necessary to tell in advance that in the Old Testament God chose one of the twelve tribes of Israel, namely the Levites, to be dedicated to serve God. We will not discuss about the tribe of Levites, but the other 11 tribes representing us as lay people. We also will not talk about pastors or servants (**ministers**) of God, people

who are ordained or chosen to serve God. We will talk about the church or believers in general as mentioned in the song at the beginning of this book, "*This Life Is Meant to Serve God*" for all believers.

Some of us may have kids. The writer's question is: What do we want or expect from our children? Do we want our children to be our servants or just be close to us?

### **Children Who Serve Us, Or Who Are Close to Us**

What is it like, our children who serve us? Yes, certainly, they would devote all their times serving us. In the morning they would prepare and serve breakfast for us. After breakfast they would clean up the table and cutleries, tidy up our rooms, wash our clothes, then go to the market to prepare and serve our lunch. After lunch, they would clean up the table and cutleries again, then tidy up the house. So on and on, they would do the daily chores continually.

With so many activities it is most unlikely that they would know our characters well and could get along with us. Would that be the kind of children we want? Or do we prefer our children with common or natural behaviour, no need to have a servant attitude, but truly know us and are close to us. So that when they see us as they come home from school, they would greet us joyfully, "*Hi, Dad!*" then run to us and hug us and kiss our cheeks. Children who would trustingly come to us to ask for help, or when they need something they would appeal to us, and sometimes whiningly, "*Please, Dad, please buy this for me!*" Or "*Come on, Dad, join us watching the movie!*"

The above two theological principles, namely one that says God's greatest desire for us is to serve Him with our lives. And the other one that says God's greatest desire for us is not so, but that we seek to know Him more and more and have a close relationship with Him, which will make us have a focus in our lives, priority of life, daily activities, and different end-results.

## **Focus in Life, Priority of Life, and Daily Activities**

### **1. Focus in Life**

If we hold with the principle that God's greatest desire for us is to serve Him, then our focus should be on how to coordinate or manage our ministries, how to work full time without taking too much rest, how to make a good Standard of Operating Procedures, how to accomplish the tasks on time, probably saving time to its minimum, how other church members can serve God, how to serve God with the least expenses and exert other ways to make our ministries work out properly, effectively and efficiently. Thus should be our focus.

But if we hold with the principle that God's greatest desire for us is to become His children who are close to Him, then our focus should be how we can know our Father so well as to be able to understand His will, and how we can get closer to Him and have a deeper relationship with Him.

### **2. Priority of Life**

If we hold with the principle that we should serve the Lord God with our lives, then our priority should be how we can take and do as many ministries as possible.

But if it is our principle to become God's children, then our priorities should be to learn more of God's word by reading much of the Bible, listen to sermons, reading commentaries and interpretations on the Bible, attend services about exploring the Bible or deepening our knowledge about the Lord God and the Scriptures, and the like. Hence, as we long to have a closer relationship with the Lord, we surely would pray more and spend regular devotional or quiet times to have fellowship with Him, to talk to and to listen to Him, and to rest our soul in Him.

### **3. Daily Activities**

If we adopt the principle that we are to serve Him, then we would have many ecclesiastical activities but might have less time to read the Bible, even less to listen to God's word. Quite often we see church ministers leave the auditorium when the word of God

is ready to be delivered, and even fall asleep while listening to the sermon. Why are they not so interested in listening to God's word? Probably because they hold on to their principle that God's greatest desire for us is to serve Him. Those who hold on to the same principle most likely would also rarely pray, and have no devotional time or quiet time with the Lord, since their time is spent for various ministries. They may be present at the prayer service, but occupy themselves with other things than focussing their heart on praying to God.

On the contrary, if we hold on to the principle that God's greatest desire for us is to become God's children, who long to be near Him, and have a close relationship or fellowship with Him, then usually we will not occupy ourselves with too many activities. Instead, we would spend more time reading the Bible, focus on listening to sermons and perhaps contemplating on or studying deeper the materials of the sermons delivered, and exert earnestly to be doer of the Word. In addition, we also would have a special time to pray and worship God quietly.



Actually, which of these two principles is true?

Let us read Luke 10:38-42,

*10:38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named **Martha** received Him into her house,*

*10:39 And she had a sister called **Mary**, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.*

*10:40 But Martha was **cumbered about much serving**, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me,*

*10:41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, **Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:***

*10:42 **But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.***

### **What Is to Serve?**

The passage above describes how Martha busied herself with serving the Lord Jesus, but the Lord said, "*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.*"

Why did the Lord Jesus say so?

There are at least 4 reasons:

**First: ministering is a gift, it is explained among others in Romans 12:6-7**

*12:6 Having then **gifts** differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith.*

*7 Or **ministry**, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching;*

The verses above explain that ministering (or serving) is a gift. What is a gift? A gift is God's mercy or God's grace. It means something that God does not need, and only by His mercy or His compassion the job is given. Why? **Because basically God does not need human help.**

When God created the universe, God created it alone without any help. Similarly, when the Israelites were in the wilderness for 40 years, God provided for this people also without any help. Not only in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament as well. God

fed 5,000 people, without asking anybody for help. He neither ask someone to buy anything for Him nor to give Him something.

## **Second: human ability is very limited**

However good and admirable a man can be, he is limited in time and space. Man only lives for a short time, and does not even know when his life will end. For example, we read or heard the news that there were still many plans and projects of Steve Jobs he could not bring about, because he died at a young age. Also, no man can be in different places at the same time, and as smart as any man could be, he remains limited.

*Psalm 103:14 For He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust.*

Or “For He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust.” (NIV)

*15 As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*

*16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

### **Third: God has hosts of angels He can command to do many things far better than us**

2 Chronicles 32:21 *And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.*

Luke 1:30 *And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.*

31 *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.*

### **Fourth: human service does not meet God's standard**

Just like us at home, we sometimes say to our small child, "Honey, please help Papa with a glass of water." This does not mean that we are not able to take some drink ourselves or that we cannot ask our servant to do it for us. Yet, we want to make our children happy by saying, "Please help Papa with a glass of water." And later, when he comes with a glass of water we would say, "Wow, that's great, thank you!" although he spoils the water along the way to us.

The quality of our service may not meet God's standards, even not meet human standards. For example, when the State Palace arranges an important event, most likely we will not be invited to serve there, even not to serve in a lower institution such as the Governor's Office, because our services does not meet their standards. But then, why are we allowed to serve God who is King of kings? Is this not just because of God's amazing grace?

### **The Object of God's Love**

Now let us go back to Mary.

Luke 10:42 says, *“But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”* This means that Mary had chosen the best, namely **sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word.**

Why is sitting at the Lord’s feet and listening to His words considered to be the best choice? It is because God has made us His children so as to become the object of His love! That is why Jesus the Lord said, *“But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen*

*that good part.*” And that good part is “*sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.*” For to be near to God and keep listening to His word will enable us to draw closer to Him and get a deeper relationship with Him, to understand His will so that we can do His will and become God-pleasing children.

It is actually God's purpose to save us and to make us His children as described among others in Romans 8:30-32.

*8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified, **them he also glorified.***

This verse tells about us being saved, which means that we are saved as it was predestined; **from the beginning** God has decided to glorify us.

And furthermore:

*8:31 What shall we then say to these things? **If God be for us, who can be against us?***

The words “*who can be against us*” bear at least two meanings. The first is obvious: since God is omnipotent, it is

easily understood that if He is on our side nothing can oppose or withstand us. Besides, the above verse also contains the understanding that when God wants to glorify us, even though we as sinful human beings are not worthy to be glorified, nobody can oppose it. Thus, by reason of His love God still wants to glorify us, however unworthy we are as sinners to be glorified, and no one can oppose His will.

*8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

So the verse continues to say that as God was willing to sacrifice His Son to save us, would He not give us everything which is best for us, after our salvation?

That is why the Bible records many of God's messages to His children that they should ask Him, such as written among others in Matthew 7:7, "**Ask**, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you ."

God's children need not worry, because "**Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.**"

It is our Father and not our Master who promised to provide for us, to give us the good things we need in life. (Matthew. 7:11)

John 16:24 *"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. **"Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."***

God's word *"Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full,"* if put in simple words could sound like this, ***"Ask whatever will bring you joy and make you happy."***

So it is clear that God has made us His children to be the object of His love, so that as His children we will be full of joy, provided for (supplied), alert and even be able to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is God's desire that His people would be the object of God's love, and this had actually been revealed in the Old Testament.

To the people of Israel the LORD said, *"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a **peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.**"* (Exodus 19:5)



God promised to make the people of Israel His special treasure. And in the book of Deuteronomy we read,

*“He found him in the desert land and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as **the apple of his eye.**”* (Deuteronomy 32:10)

Here the LORD God promised to lead, to instruct and to protect lovingly the Israelites as if He guarded the apple of His own eyes.

### **A Parable**

A gentleman was walking down the street. There he saw many homeless children, abandoned children roaming around. Some were begging, some others were scavenging garbage, and they went to sleep in the yards or spaces in front of any closed shops. Since he was a compassionate man, he took pity on them. He redeemed those children and treated them like his sons. They were well-nourished, given nutritious food, well clothed, and sent to good schools, just as his own children. He did not make any

discrimination among them. All the facilities and affections his own son obtained were acquired by all those adopted children. But then rumours spread around, telling issues that this gentleman took those homeless children not because he loved them or had compassion on them, but so that later he could have many free employees whom he needed not to pay any salaries. Thus, when they were grown up this gentleman could have them as his helpers assisting him in his business or occupations, for free.

If we were that gentleman, the writer believes that we definitely would be very disappointed and very sad, because we sincerely adopted them as our beloved children and treated them as if they were born to us naturally, and we did care for them.

Why does the writer present such a parable? Now, if we argue by saying that God has adopted us as His children with the purpose to have free servants, we are hurting God's feeling or even insulting Him. So assuming that God's love to us is not pure but with the intention to enslave us shows that we do not believe

God's word in John 3:16, "***For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that any who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life***" and thus regard it as a lie!

### **To Become God-pleasing Children**

Some time ago the writer was invited to give a lecture or a testimony about "Christian Businessmen as Evangelists" in one of the theological schools. During the Question and Answer Session, someone asked, "Sir, you've been a successful entrepreneur. Today many businessmen become servants of God and most of them are successful servants of God. What is your opinion, Sir? "

The writer replied that to be a successful entrepreneur is not an important issue, likewise a successful servant of God. Then if a successful entrepreneur is not important even so a successful servant of God, then what is important? According to the writer, **the most important is how we can become God's children that please Him.** Just like in a kingdom. Is it good to be the king's

confidant? Of course, it is. Is it good to become a wealthy man in that kingdom? Of course, it is.

However there is something better than that, namely to become children of the king, and not just that, but children who please the king. Why is to become the children of the king who please the king better compared with becoming the king's confidant or a wealthy man? Because as the king's child -- a prince or princess -- we would acquire many privileges or exclusive rights that others would not. Moreover, our Father is not just any king, He is the King of kings and the only One God. So as His children we will definitely have many privileges or exclusive rights, both in this world and even in Heaven.

### **The Writer's Testimony**

The writer deems it necessary to conclude this writing with two testimonies. In October last year, the writer traveled to Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan with a group of mostly entrepreneurs. On one occasion one of the participants said that

he could become a successful entrepreneur even though he was not a Christian. The writer responded that naturally everyone could be successful, only it was different with successful Christians since they get some privileges. "What are those privileges, Sir?" He asked. The writer replied, "If you shake hands with me, you will know the answer." "Oh, just shake hands?" He asked looking surprised. "Yes," asserted the writer. So they shook hands. After shaking hands the writer asked him, "Can you feel that my hands are very soft?" "Yes . . . Sir," He wondered. Then the writer continued, "And what does it mean to you?" The man said, "It seems as if you have never worked, Sir, unlike me. I have been working hard since my young age till now". The writer explained to him that he himself has never worked hard. If so, how could he be so successful? It was because God always sent people to help him through every stage of his business, right from the very start. And those whom the Lord has sent were actually the ones who raised and developed his business.

The same thing happened with this book. The writer once acknowledged that all the subjects in his small books were materials of his sermons which were recorded.

On Saturday, February 10, 2018, Pastor Raman Saragih, M.Th. contacted the writer via WhatsApp to ask whether he can serve at the church he was pasturing, either on Sunday the 18th or the 25th of February. The writer apologized as he had to decline the invitation, due to being preoccupied in the preparation to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Meanwhile, his elder sisters from Taiwan and America would come over soon and all of his siblings had made plans to go to Raja Ampat Papua after New Year. Truthfully there was one other reason the writer did not mention, which was the fact that he did not have the material for the sermon assigned. Though this theme "To Be Children of God or Servants of God" was already in his mind for some time and meditated upon, still the verses which could explain the truth that we are the object of God's love were not found yet. Indeed, the writer did not search for the verse deliberately, but he has

been reading the Bible diligently yet could not remember having found any verses to help to explain this.

But in the afternoon his sister sent him a SKY video containing Love Letter of Jesus entitled "*Tulus Mengasihi (Sincere Love)*" that last only one-minute. There was a fragment explaining that God has considered us as the object of His love confirmed by the Bible verses of Romans 8:30-32, which the writer has described previously. He was so very surprised and grateful to be given those very verses he was looking for -- verses which explain how God from the beginning has set His mind on us and made us the object of His amazing love -- in such a wonderful way, which seemed so simple yet awesome. After reading the verses his gratefulness abound as he recalled his inability to find those precious meaningful Scriptures and did not know how to look for them in the Bible.

We must always remember and be grateful that we are children of the King of kings, given privileges and exclusive rights,

and many conveniences also. Therefore do not change our status with another status.

### **Conclusion**

If we have the wrong theological principle of what God's greatest desires is for our lives, consequently we would have the wrong focus of life, wrong priorities of life and wrong daily activities. These may cause us to lose something or even to accept things which are not as we expect. Hence, it is most important spending time to study and explore deeper into God's Word concerning the concept of our relationship with God, to assure whether this relationship is as between servants and their Master, or between children and their Father.

If we maintain the concept that our relationship with God is a relationship between children and their Father, we would gain the revelation of our status as children of God, and this accordingly would change the way we pray. We could pray or ask for even the smallest thing, because if it is important to us, it would also be important to God our Heavenly Father. But we



could also pray or ask for big or great things to Him, because God our Heavenly Father has promised to give us whatever we ask for, *“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching **any thing that they shall ask**, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”* (Matthew 18:19)

Or *“ Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about **anything you ask for**, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.”* (NIV) We will not keep God at a distance like servants towards their Master; instead we will draw near to Him, because we know that God our Heavenly Father loves us and prefers us to be near Him.

Therefore read, listen, study, meditate and do (carry out) the word of God so that we can become His children who please Him. Draw closer to Him through our prayers and our quiet time with Him, so we can become God’s children who have a very close or intimate relationship with God our Heavenly Father.

However, serving is something God commanded as recorded in Romans. 12:11 *“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit;*

*serv*ing the Lord;" Therefore we need to serve or do our ministries for God earnestly, if we believe that it is a gift from Him to us. And do not neglect to carry out our most important and obligatory service (ministry), which is to help our children also to become God's children, divine descendants and our family to become a divine family, and lead a godly life. For more details please read the writer's book "The Major Ministry".