

SECTION 5

Participant Pages

Readings for Huddle Participants



SouthBrook
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SECTION 5: THE SERVICE TRIANGLE

A few years ago, my kids started playing this game on their screen devices called Minecraft. Half of the kids on the planet under 14 have played this game. It took me a while to understand why. The game did not seem winnable. There's this evil dragon you can kill—a supposed milestone—but my kids killed it long ago, and they're still playing. And the game has terrible graphics by today's standards. It looks like something circa Nintendo Entertainment System. Characters in the game look like blockheads walking around their block world, gathering blocks of dirt and metal to build stuff like houses and hammers.

As a dad, I want to understand what's going on in my kids' world, so I've tried to tune in at times to learn about the game and see what all the fuss is about. Most of the time, they just gather blocks of material to build structures

and make useful objects. If you arrange 3 blocks of stone and 2 pieces of wood into the right pattern, you get a stone axe that you can use to cut down trees. By smelting 4 blocks of clay, brick can be made for building a house or fort. Another combination of resources gives you TNT. They like TNT. The possibilities seem endless. Often, my kids join forces with their friends in the same world, and they all build together.

And then it dawned on me why so many kids love it.

The reason is found in the first command God gave us humans:

Then God blessed [humans] and said, *"Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."* —Genesis 1:28

Minecraft is just a simplified version of our planet. *My kids are taking dominion of their Minecraft world, just like God designed us to do here on Earth.* Even though it's an artificial world, the game satisfies something deep within them, something for which they were created, and that's this:

We humans were made to rule.

Now if you're like me, that may sound a little fifth-century. When I think of an earthly "ruler," I get this picture in my mind of a monarch in a robe on a throne with a scepter lording over a realm with servants bringing him legs of meat. That's not quite the kind of rule God had in mind for us here.

The truth is, there is one King of creation: God. He is a wise and loving monarch, not a cruel or myopic dictator, and He governs all we see, holding it all together.



He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. 17 He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. —Colossians 1:16-17

We read in Genesis how God, the Governor and King of creation, put the first humans, Adam and Eve, in this beautiful garden called Eden, in His very presence. Heaven and earth held hands. They enjoyed unbroken relationship with Him and one another. They were provided for, cared for, loved. Oh how I would love to have experienced the beauty of that place.

I believe, though, we have imagined that if humans hadn't fallen from grace, they would have remained in the garden forever. That was not the case. Instead, He commissioned humans to put their lives into play, in Service to Him as king. **"Fill the earth and govern it,"** He said.

Of course, no one on Earth today really knows quite what life outside the garden was like at that time, but the context suggests that it was ungoverned, untamed, wild. God intended that humans were either to leave the garden and make the rest of creation like it, or just keep expanding the borders of the garden until it filled the whole planet.¹

Either way, God delegated authority and responsibility to us humans to co-rule with Him, to take dominion over creation. "Partner with me in ruling over this place, like I would rule," He said. "Spread throughout the earth and bring My heaven to all of it. Be responsible for it. **You are heaven's representatives.** I'm with you."

This was to be our Service to Him, as our King. To co-rule with Him, to represent Him, is to **Serve** Him. This truth is represented by one of our tools for the S of Service, the Service Triangle:

God, our King, empowers us humans with His authority and power to Serve Him, by being His kingdom representatives on Earth.

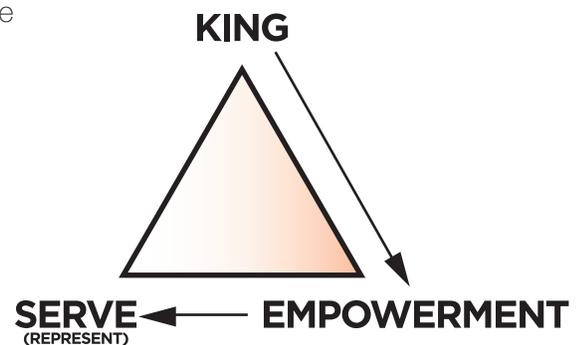
God's creation is amazing. It's like a giant play land of a hundred million possibilities. God dropped us humans onto it and said, "Go. Discover. Create. Organize. Learn how stuff works. Train animals. Grow food. Love me and each other. Make things beautiful and make beautiful things. This is how you co-rule it with me. *This is how you represent my kingdom here.* TAKE DOMINION. *I am with you.*"

For school, my son, Isaiah, and I are building an oscilloscope, a device that can graphically display and measure how voltage changes over a period of time (Now, if you read that last sentence 3 times and still have no idea what you would use an oscilloscope for, you can join my club).

Twice a week, we solder electronic components onto a circuit board. We test our circuit with a digital multi-meter. We do math I can barely understand to "lead us" to why this oscilloscope will eventually function.

How in the world did people figure this stuff out to begin with?

People discovered that lightning will travel through copper. Fast forward a few decades and we've got electrical outlets in every house that power lights and charge



¹Walton, John H., The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis, Zondervan Publishing House, Copyright 2001, John H. Walton, page 186

cell phone batteries. It blows my mind. It makes me feel tiny.

People figured out how to design a transparent, semi-permeable material that when cut precisely enough and stuck onto your eyeballs instantly improves your vision. It blows my mind. I feel like an infant in my understanding.

And these are just examples from physical science. We haven't even touched the topics of art, astronomy, music, psychology, fashion, government, medicine, teaching, farming or literature. The hidden treasures God has buried in His creation for us to discover just blow my mind. At least once I week, sincerely, I sort of shake my head and ask, "How in the world did people figure this stuff out?"

The over-simplified answer is this: We were designed for it. We've filled the earth. We've been taking dominion. It's cosmic Minecraft.

Some people think science is at odds with belief in a Creator. I believe the opposite is true. Science is this discipline of discovering what God already knows about His creation design. With each new discovery, our view of the One who made it all expands. It's as though our King planned these delayed marvels at key points in history to remind us that however far we think we've gotten, we've only just begun to discover the power, wisdom and glory of our Creator.

At least, that is how it's supposed to work.

And it's *fallen* humanity that's at the helm! Can you imagine what the earth might be like now if we humans *hadn't* turned away from our Creator, if we *had* been fully functioning in harmony with God, the way He designed us?

But humans did turn away. Barely two chapters into the story, the first two humans blew the whole thing. The man and woman listened to a cleverly spoken lie from the serpent, later revealed to be Satan², the abuser, trafficker, con artist, terrorist. Genesis 3 reveals how they believed the lie that somehow our good King was holding out on them. Like a waywardly curious child in a hailstorm, they stepped out from under God's umbrella of empowering grace, disobeying the one negative command he had given. Satan had usurped our God-given dominion.

God's mandate to fill, rule and govern the earth still stood. But the sin disease was now in our blood, and with it came darkness, destruction and death. Humans filled the earth, for sure, but so did these—in increasingly greater measure. The heavenly handshake was broken, and everything else broke with it.

FOUR KEY RELATIONSHIPS BROKEN

Bryant L. Myers, author of *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*³, says God established four foundational relationships for each human:

- A relationship with **GOD**, in which we "glorify Him and enjoy Him forever."

² You may wonder, who is Satan anyway? Is he even real? Scripture affirms that he is, as does the experience of many people today and throughout history. Both he and other spiritual forces exist.

If God created everything, why would He create Satan? Well, He didn't; at least not as Satan is now. Because God is not a dictator, he created him as a being with choice, like us. One common theory is that he was an angelic being who became jealous of God—or perhaps of us, when God created us to be special, made us in His image—and rebelled along with a bunch of others, so God threw him and the others out of heaven. So now he's taking out his ire on those of the earth, the ones made in the image of the God he hates, attempting to establish his own dominion. See Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28 and Romans 12.

Where did Satan get his power on earth? From God? No. From humans. God delegated authority to us. But Scripture says we are "slaves to the one whom we obey" (Romans 6:16). When humans obeyed Satan rather than God, he usurped our authority and has been wreaking havoc ever since.

³ Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999, p. 27

- With **SELF**, experiencing health and wholeness, understanding our worth in God's eyes.
- With **OTHERS**, knowing and being known, in genuine community and mutual service.
- And with the **REST OF CREATION**, working productively and creatively, partnering with God to care for this world and establish His rule on Earth.

Our relationship with God, of course, is the primary one, out of which all the others flow. Once humans broke that first relationship, corruption spread into the others as well, like cobra venom. And so...

Forever life, and wholeness in **GOD** were replaced by brokenness and separation. And now...

- A college student believes that because of advances in science, God is now irrelevant.
- A young girl curses God when she fails to finish her route on a climbing wall.
- People worship money, nature, themselves, and things their hands have made.

A healthy, integrated **SELF** was replaced by insecurity, narcissism, shame and disease. So now...

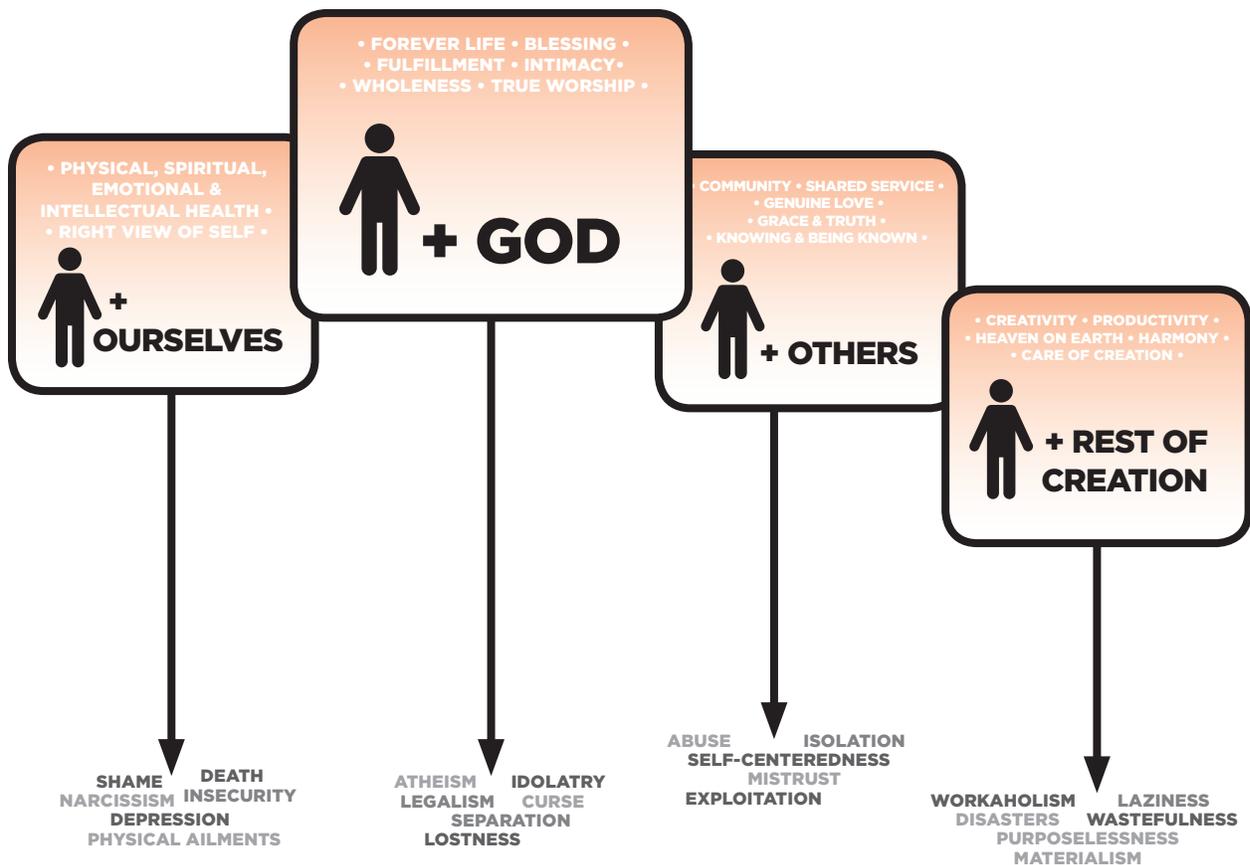
- A 3-year-old is diagnosed with Leukemia.
- Depression has become an epidemic.
- A man accepts the label of "slacker," believing that whatever he offers will not be enough anyway...so why try?

Genuine community with **OTHERS** was replaced by mistrust, abuse, and self-centeredness. Now...

- Inventors create weapons aimed at leveling entire populations.
- Opportunistic traffickers lure economically poor children with promises of education and work, only to sell them into slavery and prostitution.
- A young professional lies to her boss about a co-worker so she can get the promotion instead.

Our dominion over, and harmony with the **REST OF CREATION** was replaced by purposelessness, wastefulness, workaholicism, laziness and disaster. So...

- Able-bodied adults refuse to work, relying instead on no-longer-needed assistance.
- A father abandons his relationships with his family to further his career.
- Famines and natural disasters ravage the globe.



Instead of taking dominion in the manner of our King, we've dominated, domineered and demolished, with bodies that decay, and minds demented by sin. And the world lay firmly in the hands of our greatest enemy.⁴

Enter Jesus.

The night He arrived may have been holy and bright, but it was NOT silent or calm. It was a heavenly invasion into what had become hostile territory. *Though the world was made through him [Jesus], the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*⁵ The stable where Mary gave birth to Jesus was Heaven's beachhead on a planet firmly in the grip of an enemy regime.

Through Jesus, God our King began His campaign to bring heaven to earth. As Charlie McMahan says, He came to bring "up there down here." He came to restore those four key relationships that had been broken. In the kingdom of heaven, the effective area of God's reign, there exists NONE of this brokenness.

- In heaven, there is no depression, death, or disease, as we have fully whole **SELVES**. So Jesus brought heaven to earth, healing every person who came to him for healing. He forgave the prostitute, and gave her back dignity. He freed the crazy, naked, cemetery guy from the legion of demons, restoring him to a right mind.
- In heaven, there are no broken relationships with **OTHERS**, so He forgave the people who nailed Him to the cross. He treated the racially marginalized Samaritan woman like she had real value. He taught people to love their enemies and pray for their persecutors.

⁴ 1 John 5:19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

⁵ John 1:10

- When heaven comes, there is perfect harmony with the **REST OF CREATION**, so Jesus calmed dangerous storms at a word. He offered rhythms of rest to weary workers. He taught people to trust His Father for provision, and to be faithful in stewarding the talents they had been given, whether many or few.
- In heaven, there is no separation from **GOD**, so He modeled a life of unbroken communication with His Father. He invited the young rich guy to abandon his idol of money for true, eternal riches. And in the ultimate display of love, He gave His life to pay for our mistakes, eliminating the barrier between us and God.

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. —Romans 5:18

Jesus did humanity the right way. He paid the debt for humanity done the wrong way, since Adam. In so doing, He snatched back from Satan the God-given authority Satan had snatched from humans. God raised Jesus to the place of highest authority in all of creation.⁶

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus became the way to restoring our four key relationships. Through Jesus, we begin the journey of becoming the “us” God had in mind when He thought of us.

And through Jesus, He just like in the beginning, God invites us humans to partner with Him as His representatives to bring that same restoration to others.

AMBASSADORS

To be nominated by the President of the United States as an ambassador to a foreign land would be an amazing honor, and an awesome responsibility. Once approved by the Senate, authority is delegated to the ambassador to speak and act on *behalf* of the president, as though it were coming directly from him. A good ambassador protects and promotes the interests of the United States in that country.

That honor is ours.

Paul wrote, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.” —2 Corinthians 5:20

Jesus, the highest authority there is, has nominated those of us who has believed in His name to represent the nation of Heaven here on Earth. He has delegated authority to us to speak and act on His behalf, helping others be restored in their relationships with God, themselves, others and the rest of creation, thus bringing heaven to earth. And because the way Jesus lived was the perfect expression of what it looks like to bring heaven to earth, *all* we have to do to fulfill our roles as ambassadors is model our lives after His!

What an honor! Right? Well, yes. But if you’re like others, there may be a protest bouncing around like a ping pong ball in your skull when you hear “just live like Jesus,” that goes something like this:

⁶ Ephesians 1:19-22 [God] raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church...

“Of course JESUS could do the things He did! HE WAS GOD! / can’t do those things!”

And you’d be right...if Jesus had utilized His own God powers on earth. The way He loved, the teachings He gave, the miracles He did, the way He overcame temptation—if He had done those by His own power AS GOD, there would be **no way** we could live the way Jesus said we would live. He said, *“Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”* —John 14:12

Thankfully, that’s not quite how it happened. Yes, Jesus was God, 100%, as John 1 says. And Jesus, like the first human Adam, was born without sin. No earthly father passed a sin nature onto Him.

But all that means is that Jesus lived, like Adam and Eve had begun to live, as *fully* human, not *super* human. And while He was God with skin on, He did not rely on His own power as God to live. In fact Jesus is not recorded as doing any miracles until *after* His baptism, when the Holy Spirit came and remained on Him. He lived as a *human*, and scripture even says He experienced every kind of temptation we experience.⁷

Jesus did not do His works as God, but as a man rightly related to God, living in the power of the Holy Spirit. And that same Holy Spirit that empowered Him **also lives in us, who follow Him.**

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. —2 Corinthians 1:21-22⁸

See, when our **King** nominated us as His ambassadors to earth, He didn’t just give us the responsibility and authority to act on His behalf. He also gave us His Holy Spirit. God lives in us. By that Spirit, we are empowered to represent our King, having access to the same heavenly resources and power that Jesus did.

He didn’t just give us the badge. He also gave us the gun.⁹

To represent Him is to serve Him. As an ambassador “serves at the pleasure of the president,” so we serve at the pleasure of our Heavenly King.

TWO KEYS TO KINGDOM SERVICE

Imagine this. The president has chosen you as his next ambassador to China. He has outfitted you with a place to live, transportation, a bankroll, and even a security detail—everything you need to execute your role and live your life while you’re there. You board the plane for China.

Your role is critical. Both nations are world super powers. Each country sees the other both as a potential adversary, and a strategic partner. Foreign trade, the role of democracy, human rights, and the prevention of terrorism are all issues of mutual interest, which each country approaches with entirely different sets of values. Clear and sensitive representation of our nation’s interests is crucial.

But you’ve got some plans of your own. The foreign trade conversation you have scheduled this week sounds like a drag, so you decide instead to throw the biggest party west of Los Angeles. With your monthly stipend, you spend the week blinging out your place at the embassy with flat screens, strobe lights, a “phat” music system

⁷Hebrews 4:15

⁸See also Acts 1:8

⁹I heard Doug Paul use this analogy in a 3dm training, and the Service Triangle is very similar to the Kingdom Triangle, as created by Mike Breen.

and enough refreshments for all of Beijing. You send your driver on rounds to pick up a D.J. and a litany of ex-pats who have a hankering for a taste of home. To ensure things don't get too out of control, you enlist your security detail as bouncers.

Now, I *hope* a scenario like this, which sounds like a bad Seth Rogen film, is a rarity in U.S. diplomatic history. But it does make obvious an important key to Service, and that's this:

As God's ambassadors, we must *surrender* our own agendas, and take up the agenda of our King.

Jesus was the Father's perfect representative. Take a look at a few of the things Jesus said about taking up the agenda of His Father:

"Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."
—John 5:19

For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me. —John 5:36

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. —John 14:9

Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. —John 14:10

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."
—Matthew 26:39

You know those miracles and healings Jesus did? According to Jesus, they were the Father's idea. Those things He said? They were just what the Father gave Him to say. He represented His Father so perfectly that He was able to say, "Hey, when you see me, you're seeing the Father." And He was a willing participant in His own assassination...not because He was excited to be tortured and killed, but because He agreed with His Father that we were worth saving.

Jesus did not seek to use His Father's resources to accomplish His own agenda. Jesus surrendered His agenda, and offered all He had to accomplish His Father's. "Not as I will, but as you will..."

God graciously provides for us *everything* we need to live and accomplish what He has given us to do here¹⁰. Can we ask God for a job, buy a new vehicle, renovate our house, ask for financial blessing, or take a vacation? Of course! He is a good Father.

But we must remember why God has placed us here. And whose it all really is. And that we are *stewards*, not *owners* of the things in life we call "ours."

God is looking for those who will say, "Here I am. I offer my life, and everything I have, to your service. Jesus, I choose to live the way you would live if you were me."¹¹

That's **surrender**—one of the keys to kingdom service.

There's another key as well. The second key can be found, oddly, in an account from Jesus' life that involves smelly feet.

¹⁰ 2 Peter 1:2-3 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

¹¹ This is an adaptation of an idea shared by Dallas Willard.

Have you ever had a significant bout of stinky feet? I'll reluctantly confess, I have. Once in fifth grade, I went to a summer camp for a week. When my parents picked me up, I was wearing the same clothes as when they dropped me off. I hadn't showered once. Worse, I had been wearing the same shoes all week in the hot sun with no socks. I had recognized a growing odor coming from my feet as the week went on, so I tried smearing some of my otherwise unused shampoo onto the insides of my shoes (no water, just the shampoo), which added a sickeningly fruity scent to the rest of what was going on there. By the end of the week, the smell was indescribable. My parents threw my shoes away, and made me ride home with my feet out the window.

If there's one thing that can be said of feet it's this: They STINK—which is what makes this account from Jesus' life so notable. The scene took place in a second story room the night before Jesus was killed as Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples:

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began washing his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. —John 13:3-5

Now, let's sift through some of the details here, and focus on two key phrases:

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power,

SO...

He began washing his disciples' feet.

Can you appreciate the enormous disparity in these two statements? In Jesus' time, walking was the primary mode of transportation. Stomping around in leather sandals with no socks in the hot sun through dirt, grime, and camel poop year after year made the job of "washing feet" particularly unsavory. In a typical household, the task was generally given to the lowliest servant.

Today, that would be like saying, "Gina was told that the board had instated her as the new president and CEO of her company...SO Gina began visiting employees' homes to clean their bathrooms."

Jesus turned the world's hierarchy upside down. What did Jesus do with all His authority? He took the role of the lowliest servant.

That's called **humility**.

Humility is when we put others before ourselves. It is when we think neither too highly, nor too lowly of ourselves, but rather embrace a correct view of our identity before God, as His beloved children. As C.S. Lewis said, "Humility is not thinking less of ourselves; it is thinking of ourselves less." God calls us to live humbly.

Jesus said, "The kings of the Gentiles hold power over their people. And those who order them around call themselves Protectors. But you must not be like that. Instead, the most important among you should be like the youngest. The one who rules should be like the one who serves." —Luke 22:25-26, NIRV

When I think of humility and surrender, I think of Kelly, a friend of ours from our time in Mexico with Back2Back Ministries, an organization devoted to orphan care.

Every summer we would have high school and college aged interns come from the U.S. to help with grunt work like organizing tool trailers, and helping with food prep. Kelly, our lead intern one summer, arrived a week late, finishing up her semester of college. The other 10 or so interns were already there. The attitude among them was...interesting. We would ask them to clean a room. "Not it!" would be their reply. Last one to say "not it" had to clean the room. Not the spirit of humble service we were hoping for.

And then along came Kelly, showing why she had been chosen as the lead intern. The first week she was there, our staff director, Todd, walked into a children's home dorm bathroom, which serviced about 14 four and five year-old boys, to find Kelly on her hands and knees scrubbing their very neglected toilets. "Kelly, you don't need to do that!" Todd said. "You're the lead intern. You can delegate that to someone else!"

"I know," she said. "But I didn't want to ask anyone to do anything I wouldn't do myself first."

That is humility. That is surrender. That's modeling what it means to rule in God's kingdom. To rule is to serve.

In humility and surrender, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are now postured to take dominion the way God intended: To partner with Him in bringing heaven to earth, by restoring people to right relationship with God, themselves, others, and the rest of creation through the work of Jesus on our behalf.

Cosmic Minecraft, God's way, has begun again.

