

Daily Devotions to Help You to "Live as a Servant" as You Live the Lifestyle of a Faithful Steward

Monday

Are You Living as a Channel or Terminal?

Scripture Reading:

"Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:38).

Throughout life we receive and give. We must receive in order to give and live at all. God gives us all the resources and talents to make living and giving possible. Keeping what we have brings little or no blessing to us, certainly none to others. If we consume all of our time, possessions, and energy ourselves, we become empty, spiritually dead, unhappy, friendless people.

The need to give and the benefits of giving can be illustrated by contrasting the Sea of Galilee with the Dead Sea, both of which are located in the Holy Land. The Sea of Galilee receives water from the northern mountain streams, which then flows into the Jordan River. Because the sea allows water to flow through it, it lives. On its banks, flowers bloom and bushes grow. Birds and animals drink from its waters. People swim in it and enjoy water activities. Nearby communities enjoy the waterfront.

The Jordan River flows south into the Dead Sea, which, having no outlet, keeps all the water it receives. The Dead Sea simply takes without giving. The water has become stagnant with no birds or animals willing to drink from it. No fish live in it. No plants spring up around it. There is no life; in fact, the water destroys life. The very fact that the sea takes without giving has created death in and around

it. It is a reservoir rather than a channel. Just as there are these two different kinds of seas, there are two kinds of people. People who share nothing and serve no one act as terminals. They will end life unhappy, empty, and stagnant. Others are like the Sea of Galilee, a channel which receives and gives. Our purpose is to be channels of God's love and goodness. By His grace, God transforms us into generous givers willing to allow His blessings to flow through us to others.

When we focus on "I, me, mine, and myself," we take care of "number one" to the exclusion of others. Since others are not important, we don't look for opportunities to help or serve.

Individuals who act as channels of God's love and gifts put self aside. Jesus said, *"Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:38).* God refills serving people with more love, time, gifts, and abilities to share with others. *"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).*

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to be your mouth, hands, and feet in service to others. Let me not hoard Your blessings but allow them to flow through me to others. Amen.

Tuesday

Living to Serve

Scripture Reading:

"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13).

As God's people, we are urged to "fix our eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2). The writer to the Philippians asserted, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). What is that attitude? When we "fix our eyes on Jesus," what will we see?

We see the Suffering Servant about Whom Isaiah wrote. The One Who "took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows"; the One Who was "pierced for our transgressions . . . crushed for our iniquities . . . and by [Whose] wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4, 5).

We see the Son of Man Who, in His own words, "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). This is the Son of Man Who lived a childhood in obedience to His Father and to the earthly parents who were chosen for Him. This is the Son of Man Who preached and taught, Who healed the sick, confronted the wicked, and comforted the despairing. This is the Son of Man Who calls us to "deny [ourselves] and take up [our crosses] and Follow [Him]" (Matthew 16:24).

We follow Him in paths of service. Just as Jesus did, we serve when it might be inconvenient or when the person needing our service is unlovely. Just as Jesus did, we put others first. Just as Jesus endured the cross "for the joy set before Him" (Hebrews 12:2), we, too, will find joy and fulfillment in serving in Jesus' name.

Prayer: Lord, just as You came not to be served but to serve, grant me a serving heart. Help me to see opportunities to share Your grace and love with others. Help me to put my love for You into action. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Wednesday

Putting God's Words into Practice

Scripture Reading:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fail, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand" (Matthew 7:24-26).

God not only wants us to hear His Words, He expects us to put them into practice. "Dear children," wrote the Apostle John, "let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18). We put God's words into practice by doing that which we were created to do: "good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). Good works are evidence of the faith that we have. James wrote, "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:17). Through faith, we are enabled to understand God's will and equipped to do it. As wise people who build their foundations on the Rock, we . . .

- are poor in spirit.
- are peacemakers.
- are salt and light.
- don't resist an evil person but turn the other cheek.
- love our enemies.
- give to the needy without seeking recognition.
- pray humbly and sincerely.
- serve only the Lord rather than money.
- serve others.
- store up treasures in Heaven.
- trust God to provide for our needs.

With our lives built on the Word of God, we will be able to withstand all the dangers and temptations in life. God will protect us and see

us through all difficult circumstances and empower us to be the servants He has called us to be.

Prayer: Lord, You demonstrated Your tremendous love for me by suffering the agony and humiliation of the Cross so that I can live as a forgiven child of God. By grace, help me live a life of gratitude, and to be a faithful steward. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Thursday

Called to Serve

Scripture Reading:

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10).

Paul wrote the following to the believers in Ephesus: *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* (Ephesians 2:10). The instruction is clear that, as sinners saved by grace alone, we are to render service and not sit in idleness.

In Matthew 20:28, we read, *"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."* The very nature of Jesus, as revealed in Scripture, is the example that should be our encouragement to serve others. Acknowledging Christ for Who He is and what He has done to redeem us as sinners, we begin to understand His nature and purpose for us. As forgiven people, we have the redemptive purpose of living a life of faithful service to others in Jesus' name. Christ's love for us and our love for Him make our lives of servanthood possible. Through a loving relationship with Him, we are willing to live lives in faithful service.

As God's people, we are called to love God with all of our hearts, souls, and minds and to

love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37). The key to our service is to live with an attitude that is God-centered. With God as our focus, we will want to love and serve Him and others. Unfortunately, because we are by nature self-centered, our interest is in serving ourselves instead of serving others. When we succumb to the temptation of putting ourselves first, we place ourselves in the center of life, and we become less interested and ultimately unaware of the needs of others. God's grace turns us around. In Christ, He has put us first, so now we are freed to put others first.

Jesus said in Luke 4:8, *"Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."* Our prayer is that God will enable and strengthen us to put others first as we faithfully respond to His call to serve.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for calling me to be one of Your stewards. Grant me faith to be faithful in my stewardship. Help me to use my talents and gifts in service to You and others. You are the source and owner of all things. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Friday

What's on God's Refrigerator Door?

Scripture Reading:

"May Your unfailing love be my comfort, according to Your promise to Your servant" (Psalm 119:76).

If you are a parent or grandparent or even just an admirer of a young child, your refrigerator door may be the showcase of one or more paintings or drawings. To a visitor, that work of art may be just a mass of scribbles, but to the one who loves the child it is a masterpiece. We love the gift because of the person who made it and gave it to us. It is precious to us because it was a gift from the heart. The motive of the child was pure and loving.

Perhaps our gifts to God are similar. We're such amateurs, such babies. God could accomplish His work so much more efficiently by Himself. Our works, even if monumental by human standards, are just scribbles if God would judge them in relation to His ability. Because He loves us, though – and loves us far more than a parent or grandparent loves a child – He looks at our works with eyes of love. He sees our hearts and knows we are motivated by love and faith, and He is pleased. He is so pleased that, if He had a refrigerator, He'd use it to display our works done for His glory.

God has given us gifts to use for this purpose – to glorify Him by serving others. In 1 Peter 4:10 we read, *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.”* God has seen to it that each of us has something to offer. He gives us the privilege of serving and then provides all that we need to do so.

Just as the budding art student improves with the help of a teacher and with appropriate tools to create his work, so does God teach us through His Word how to fulfill our purpose and how to improve our service. So also He gives gifts of time and money and talents and then His Word and Sacrament to strengthen us for service.

Prayer: Lord, by nature I am a selfish and self-centered person. Change me into a person who sees others as brothers and sisters in Christ. Help me to love others. Amen.

Saturday

A Life of Service

Scripture Reading:

“Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13).

Whatever our position or status in life we are called to share God's love in acts of service to

all people. *“Love your neighbor as yourself”* (Mark 12:31) is a command that reaches out to everyone. Paul exhorts His readers, *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”* (Galatians 6:10).

Lydia was one believer who lived out Paul's admonition: *“Practice hospitality.”* Luke writes that, when Paul and those traveling with him gathered outside the city gate, Lydia was one listening. She *“was a worshiper of God [and] the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.”* She responded first by being baptized along with the members of her household and then immediately inviting all the missionaries to *“come and stay at [her] house”* (Acts 16.11-15). What a model of hospitality, sharing, and serving this early Christian steward is!

We may find it easy to write a check, a somewhat simple way to show kindness for another, but how willing are we to open up our homes and lives to those who spend their lives in service to God's Kingdom? The writer to the Hebrews gives us a list of ways to serve others: *“Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering”* (Hebrews 13:1-3). A life of service brings joy to those serving and those being served and to the heart of God as well.

Prayer: Dear Lord, You want me to love all people. Place in me a loving and serving heart. Encourage me to roll up my sleeves, get involved, and be in service to others. Amen.