

Learning From Jesus

Week 18

Kingdom Serving: How Living in the Kingdom is the Cure for the Need to Judge

Key Verse

... Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.

Matthew 20:26

... I am among you as one who serves.

Luke 22:27

Thoughts (Celebration.. LG p.148)

As the cross is the sign of submission, so the towel is the sign of service.

Richard J. Foster

Learn the lesson that, if you want to do the work of the prophet, what you need is not a scepter but a hoe.

Bernard of Clairvaux

We are called to serve through the many little deaths of going beyond self. And as we live our lives for the good of others, amazingly, we find ourselves...

Richard J. Foster

Prayer

May I See You Today

Dearest Lord, may I see you today and every day in the person of your sick, and while nursing them, minister unto you. Though you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize you, and say: "Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you."

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Richard Foster Video: Service

Central Truths:

- "Active helpfulness... means, initially, simple assistance in trifling, external matters.... One who worries about the loss of time that such petty, outward acts of helpfulness entail is usually taking the importance of his own career too solemnly" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, quoted in *Celebration of Discipline*, p. 135).
- Whereas the cross is the sign of submission, the towel is the sign of service.
- Jesus helped his disciples resolve the issue of who was the greatest among them by washing their feet, thus reinterpreting the meaning of greatness.
- Service is the Discipline of the many "little deaths" of going beyond ourselves, and it has to work itself out in practical life.
- The grace of God empowers us to move beyond ourselves and into service.
- Differences between self-righteous service and true service:
 - Self-righteous service
 1. Comes through human effort.
 2. Is impressed with the big deal.
 3. Requires external rewards.
 4. Is highly concerned about results.
 5. Picks and chooses whom to serve.
 6. Is affected by moods and whims.
 7. Is temporary.
 8. Is insensitive and insists on meeting a need.
 9. Fractures community.
 - True Service
 1. Comes from a relationship with the divine Other deep inside.
 2. Finds it almost impossible to distinguish the small from the large service.
 3. Rests contented in hiddenness.
 4. Is free of the need to calculate results.
 5. Is indiscriminate in its ministry.
 6. Ministers simply and faithfully because there is a need.
 7. Is a lifestyle.
 8. Can withhold the service as freely as perform it.
 9. Builds community.
- To arrive at true service, we must get beyond the feeling that we deserve a reward for our efforts for others.
- A way to become more involved in the Discipline of service would be to pray each day, "Lord, lead me today to somebody whom I can serve."

Notes:

A Conversation With Dallas Willard and Richard Foster**Service**

RF: Now, submission fits well with service, doesn't it?

DW: It's amazing how well all these things go together, but they truly do. When you serve someone, you do good for them, turning loose the result. You don't ask for anything back; you just serve them. And Jesus, of course, has set this example over and over. In the Gospels you see his teaching about that.

RF: It's interesting; just a week ago, I was with a wonderful group of people, chaplains in the Coast Guard. They had been studying *Celebration of Discipline*, and they brought that passage about true service versus self-righteous service, where I discuss how true service can rest contented in just serving, whereas self-righteous service has to be known. And they were asking how that fits with the kind of culture they live in, where they make reports to their superior officers and try at least once a year to prove how wonderful they are, and it was a very helpful question because [it brings in this context—and not just people in a military context].

DW: You know, this is what Paul is addressing in Colossians when he talks about serving your masters. Using the old language, it's "not with eyeservice as men pleasers" but unto the Lord, because it's from the Lord that you will receive your reward, and I think that's the key in that kind of a situation. You do the report, and you do it truthfully, but you don't try to make yourself look good. You just state it the way it is and leave the recognition up to God, and then, whatever humans do, well, that's their job. But in service, you are looking to God and not man.

RF: It's very interesting in that context when they ask that question. Just to be humorous, I asked if there was anyone in the room with a high enough rank to answer that question. And the person in charge got up and spoke to this issue in much the same way as you shared. It was really quite beautiful. If we do our work well, and we report that honestly, the results will have their desired effects.

DW: That's right, and, you know, the meaning of life is service to others. That's why Jesus said that if you try to save your life, you will lose it. People are all around—in universities and churches—thinking about what is the meaning of life. The meaning of life is service to others, and anyone who will do that will find the meaning of life and [find] that their lives are good.

RF: The reality [is] that the Disciplines open us into such a life that we can love God and love our neighbors as ourselves.

DW: That's right, and you know that if you are mad at somebody, the best way to [deal with it] is to serve them. You won't be mad very long. You will have invested in them, and that disciplinary connection will come into play. Service is just a part of life in the kingdom of God, and when we accept it as such, the disciplinary effects are just tremendous.

Spiritual Tool: Prayer Exercises ('Celebration' curric. LG p. 161-162)

Thoughts

Set aside time for a slow, careful, and meditative reading of the climactic moment recorded in John 13:1-17 (the Bible Study passage for this lesson), when Jesus washed his disciples' feet and then declared of his act of service,
"I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."
 (vs. 15)

Use the following suggestions to help your reading become an act of intimate fellowship with God:

- Pray that your reading will become a form of communion with God. Imaginatively place yourself in the event, reading the narrative as if you were actually there as one of the disciples.
- Ask God to use key words or phrases to stir an inner response in you. If and when that happens, stop reading and meditate on that word or phrase.
- Pray for insight into what God is teaching you, and for wisdom to apply that insight to your life.
- After reading through the passage at least twice, contemplate its significance as a whole. Then reflect on any particular insights of personal significance to you that emerged while you were reading. Collect and express your thoughts by writing them down.

Emotions

Reflect on what you have experienced as joyous about voluntary service.

Will

Ask God to help you recognize ways in which you are reluctant to submit to others by allowing yourself to be served. Reflect on what this reluctance reveals about your understanding of your relationship with others.

Behavior

Identify an area in which you may be practicing a form of "self-righteous service." Ask God to reveal to you how you may replace it with true service.

Social Interactions

Slow down long enough to practice the service of listening in a context in which you might normally rush past while preoccupied with tasks, time constraints, or your own needs and obligations.

Definitions of Prayer

Part Two: Moving Upward: Seeking the Intimacy We Need

(from 'Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home' - R Foster – Parts Two (Upward) and Three (Outward) will follow in the next weeks)

The Prayer of Adoration

"When our reply to God is the most direct of all, it is called adoration. Adoration is the spontaneous yearning of the heart to worship, honor, magnify, and bless God... we ask for nothing and cherish him." (p.81)

The Prayer of Rest

"Through the Prayer of Rest God places his children in the eye of the storm. When all around us is in chaos and confusion, deep within we know stability and serenity... while a thousand frustrations seek to distract us, we remain focused and attentive. This is the fruit of the Prayer of Rest." (p. 93)

Sacramental Prayer

"Sacramental Prayer is incarnational prayer. [In sacramental prayer] we can be lifted into high, holy reverence by the richness and depth of a well-crafted liturgy... [or] through the warmth and intimacy of spontaneous worship." (p.105)

Unceasing Prayer

"[Unceasing Prayer is] continual conversations with God." (p.119)

The Prayer of the Heart

"The Prayer of the Heart is the prayer of intimacy. It is the prayer of love and tenderness of a child to Father God. [Often called 'abba prayer.'] Like the mother hen, who gathers her chicks under her wings, we, through the Prayer of the Heart, allow God to gather us to himself – to hold us, to coddle us, to love us (Luke 13:34)." (p.131)

Meditative Prayer

"In Meditative Prayer the Bible ceases to be a quotation dictionary and becomes instead 'wonderful words of life' that lead us to *the* Word of life. It differs from the study of Scripture. Whereas the study of Scripture centers on exegesis, the meditation upon Scripture centers on internalizing and personalizing the passage. The written word becomes a living word addressed to us." (p.146)

Contemplative Prayer

"In its most basic and fundamental expression, Contemplative Prayer is a loving attentiveness to God... [The goal of contemplative prayer] is union with God." (pp.158, 159)

Morning Prayer

(Celtic Daily Prayer, Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community; Harper 2002, pp 17-19)

Said or sung all together except for the sentences marked 'Call' which are for the Leader only.

*+ indicates that you may make the sign of the cross.
All say together the sections in **bold type***

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Opening sentences

**One thing I have asked of the Lord,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life;
to behold the beauty of the Lord
and to seek Him in His temple.**

Call: Who is it that you seek?

Response: **We seek the Lord our God.**

Call: Do you seek Him with all your heart?

Response: **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Call: Do you seek Him with all your soul?

Response: **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Call: Do you seek Him with all your mind?

Response: **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Call: Do you seek Him with all your strength?

Response: **Amen. Christ, have mercy.**

Declaration of faith

**To whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life,
and we have believed and have come to know
that You are the Holy One of God.**

**Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory.**

Scripture Readings

Prayers for others

Canticle

**Christ, as a light
illumine and guide me.
Christ, as a shield
overshadow me.
Christ under me;
Christ over me;**

**Christ beside me
 on my left and my right.
 This day be within and without me,
 lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.
 Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;
 in the mouth of each who speaks unto me.
 This day be within and without me,
 lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.
 Christ as a light;
 Christ as a shield;
 Christ beside me
 on my left and my right.**

Blessing

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
 wherever He may send you.
 May He guide you through the wilderness,
 protect you through the storm.
 May He bring you home rejoicing
 at the wonders He has shown you.
 May He bring you home rejoicing
 once again into our doors.**

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Homework for May 6th (remember – start at 6 PM!)

Rule of Life Draft

In preparation for our last two week's work on a Rule of life, bring in next week a series of activities that you **already do** with some regularity ('rule' comes from Latin *regula*, 'regular') that feed your spirit with God's life. Think large, across all the fabric of your life in developing this list, not just of the 'devotional' exercises and tools we have been practicing, but also include some of the 'tools' we have been experimenting with if they have been life-giving to you and more regular in your own life. Please list up to 10 of them under these two headings, and in this order:

- A list of 10 things in your life that bless you, esp including 'fun things'
- A list of 10 'spiritual tools' or devotional habits that bless you.

In weeks to come we will think about what you might like to add in the future, but for now list what you already do.