

LET US



serve

7 DAY DEVOTIONAL

BY PASTOR SAMMY LOPEZ

Introduction

With every new year comes a new focus. With every new focus comes a new purpose. With every new purpose should come maturity. If we are not maturing every year, then we are wasting a year! This is why having yearly gut checks is a good thing when launching into new spiritual seasons.

The focus of this devotional is to revisit our service to the Lord and ask ourselves personal questions. How are we currently serving? Is being of service part of my daily routine? Why should I serve? For the next seven days, we will be encouraged to examine our hearts and motives in the area of service. The greatest question we must ask ourselves this week is, “Am I spiritually maturing in ways that improve the way I serve?” My prayer is that we begin the new year being spiritually refueled in the Lord as we serve Him and His church with gladness!

Psalms 100:2¹

“Serve the Lord with gladness...”

- Pastor Sammy Lopez (Mighty Fortress Church)

¹ NASB

You Are Not Forgotten

(Day 1)

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 6:10- *“For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”*²

Have you ever felt as if people overlook your investment in the body of Christ? You have given your heart, time, and energy, but feel as if what you do is seen through a blind eye. Too often, our churches are filled with individuals who believe that what they do is never appreciated. Therefore, the response is often that of frustration, disappointment, and discouragement. When discouragement sets in, we tend to quit and/or look for another place to serve, in hopes that maybe someone will appreciate what we do. Stories like this happen all the time. Our human nature thrives on recognition. We long for people to appreciate what we do and to celebrate our hard work. Yet this is not always the case. There will be times when people will not be aware of our accomplishments. The danger is to take this personally. How we respond when there are no words of appreciation is going to be crucial in our growth process. How do we do this? Consider what the author of Hebrews says, *“For God is not unjust to forget your work..”* These words are a game changer! The author is explaining that God has not forgotten the time, the work, and the energy you have personally invested in His people. God see’s everything that we do in His name. When our service is done in love, (*“and the love which you have shown towards His name,”*) even more so the Lord will not forget! One of the most effective ways in overcoming the feeling of being forgotten, is to remember who we are trying to honor and please in the first place. At the same time, it is important that the body of Christ become more aware and mindful in not overlooking those who serve. Giving credit and appreciation to those who labor with their lives can boost anyone’s confidence! Yet, let’s also keep in mind that we will be overlooked at times, and it’s important to remember that what we do is for God’s glory, and it is He that will give us our reward! The author concludes saying, *“in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”*

² NASB

Unfortunately, there are some who at one time faithfully served and ministered and are no longer doing so; but you stay faithful! Focus your energy on pleasing the Lord, even at times without a thank you from others. For it will not be your pastor or your church leadership that will say the words “well done,” it will be the One who has not forgotten you, for He knows what you have done for His glory!

PRAYER

“Lord, remind me that what I do is to please You and to honor You alone. Help me to not take the lack of appreciation as personal, but help me to overcome this with the joy of serving You. Bring me joy in service and a desire to bless others above myself. In Jesus name...amen.”

Give To Get

(Day 2)

SCRIPTURE

Luke 6:38- *“Give, and it will be given to you; a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over--will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”*³

As Christians, we have been taught that it is much better to give than to receive. This statement spoken by Jesus is far from cliché. It is a proven fact.⁴ When we learn to give from our innermost being, there seems to always be a blessing attached to that. As we read the scripture above, we can't help but consider what Jesus was talking about. Notice the first few lines as it states, *“Give, and it will be given to you.”* These words are a promise. The way we give of ourselves, our time, our talent, our treasure, our love, and our effort, will come back to us in the same way (good or bad). If we give sparingly, we receive sparingly. If we give greatly, we will receive greatly. Jesus continues to say, *“a good measure-pressed down, shaken together, and running over—will be poured into your lap.”* When working in the fields in the days of Jesus, the workers would wear long robes so they could hold and carry large sums of grain. Jesus is using imagery here as one pouring lots of grain into the lap of another. What we put into our giving, we receive just as great! Jesus continues to say, *“For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”* How we serve the Lord with our time, talents, and treasures, will come back to us either great or small. If I measure my serving with a teaspoon, I will receive a teaspoon's worth back. If I measure by giving with a tablespoon, I will receive a tablespoon's worth back. However, if I measure my serving and giving as with a gallon, I will receive a gallon's worth back! What we put into something, is what we will receive. Consider today, how you have been serving and giving. Is it time to give a bigger measure this year, as you serve and give with a joyful heart? We're there any areas of your life last year that was given to the Lord in teaspoons and need to be changed to gallons? We can always improve in these areas. Let this year be a fresh start in how we serve, give, and receive.

³ CSB

⁴ Acts 20:35

PRAYER

“Lord, help me to learn to serve with my whole life. Teach me also to give from a whole heart. Forgive me when I have given You my scraps and not my best. Also, forgive me for complaining while serving. May I serve and give to my fullest as You have made me full. In Jesus name...amen.”

For Even Jesus

(Day 3)

SCRIPTURE

Mark 10:45- *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*⁵

When we consider the detail the Lord put into His church, we can't help but to be thankful for all He's done. Jesus could have come into this world on a white horse, born in the best facility money could buy, live a lush and lavish lifestyle while on earth, and even take His rightful place in the temple by making all who entered to worship Him. However, that's not how Jesus did it. He came unto us not to be served but instead that He Himself would serve us! When we truly marinate on this verse, it's difficult to fathom why Jesus would serve us when it is us who should be serving Him. Yet, the Son of Man came to do the serving. He came to show us what it looked like. Jesus Himself said that He came to serve. The word "serve" is the Greek word "*diakoneo*." It's where we get the word "deacon." Basically, this means that Jesus came to wait upon us, attend to us, and to render service. His love for His creation was so deep and strong that He took His serving to another level by giving of His life as a ransom! This means He served us to the point of paying our price of death on the cross. He was the King that gave His life as a servant! This is why Jesus served the way He did, so He could communicate to those who would follow Him, how to be a servant above all. Jesus shows us this in three ways. First, He put the needs of others before His own. Second, He went above and beyond the call of duty when He served others. Third, He never complained. May we learn how to serve others through the example of Jesus, and be willing to put others before ourselves. Let us go beyond the call of duty, and never complain when serving the body of Christ. If Jesus did it, we can follow His lead and serve others in the same way! "*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*"⁶ Be a "friend" and serve as Jesus did.

⁵ NASB

⁶ John 15:13

PRAYER

“Lord teach me how to serve like you. To put others before me, to go beyond the call of duty, and to not complain while serving others. Give me a desire to serve, a love to do so, and a character that reveals that You are my Savior. In Jesus name... amen.”

Who's The Greatest?

(Day 4)

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 23:10-12- *“Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. 11 But the greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”*

When it comes to education, our desire is to be well educated. When it comes to finances, our plan is to be well taken care of. When it comes to relationships, our hope is to have as many as possible. When it comes to position, our goal is to achieve the highest honor. There is nothing wrong with wanting the best for ourselves, however, Jesus teaches us a lesson that goes against the grain of our own pursuits. The greatest of all time is not the one who calls the shots, or the one who has a great position, nor the one who is recognized with having high prestige. According to Jesus, the greatest among you will be the servant! Jesus' message during this time went against the current. While many were seeking a great education in the Jewish law in hopes of being part of the Jewish government, Jesus throws a curveball of sorts. He said, *“Do not be called leaders, for One is your Leader.”* Jesus was reminding us that leadership and direction comes from the Father. According to Jesus, the leader is the servant. The one who serves is the greatest among us. We might not be seen as “great” on earth, but it is the one who serves that will be considered great in the Kingdom. Jesus goes on to say, *“Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”* It is this kind of teaching that goes counter-culture! Today, we do the opposite. We're taught to let everyone see what we do and in turn exalt ourselves publicly. But Jesus says to humble ourselves and He will do the exalting! Your job is to humble you, God's job is to exalt you. If you start doing God's job, then He will start doing yours. Learn easy! If there are areas in your life that you've recognized that have been more exalting of self, rather than being a servant, ask the Lord today to change your perspective so that you will be more like Him. The greatest leaders are the greatest servants. The greatest servants are recognized as the greatest leaders in the Kingdom!

PRAYER

“Father God, thank You for showing me the importance of being a servant. Forgive me when my ambitions have outweighed your purpose for my life. May what I do as a leader be noticed even greater as a servant. Teach me to serve like you so that I may lead with integrity. In Jesus name...amen.”

Use Your Gifts

(Day 5)

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 4:10- *“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*

At the moment of our salvation, each of us we're given spiritual gifts (The apostle Paul explains more of this in 1 Corinthians 12). Whether our gift is that of having a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, faith, or healing, each gift was given for a purpose. Each gift given by the Holy Spirit was not given so that we would bless ourselves or show our “spirituality,” but was given for the sole purpose of blessing, edifying and connecting with the body of Christ. As each player on a football team has a responsibility to help their team march towards victory, so each individual member of the body of Christ has just as an important role. If a football team doesn't have a running back, a wide receiver, or a quarterback, that team will not get very far. If a player doesn't show up for practice or a game, it will hurt the team greatly. In the same way, each and every one of us has a specific role and position to play in the body. If we are not present and involved, it only hurts the team! Along with having our sins forgiven and no longer being separated from God, our salvation also gives us the honor of being part of a bigger community— the CHURCH. This is why He gave you a spiritual gift so that you can play a role in the bigger picture!⁷ Peter writes and encourages us to use the *“special gift”* and to *“employ it in serving one another.”* In other words, let's get to work by using our gifts to bless others! It would be a shame to think that we could be a missing piece of the puzzle in God's grand design for our church and yet never take part in it. Peter continues to say, *“serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* Our spiritual gifts should not be taken for granted or to be used carelessly. Peter encourages us to use them as *“good stewards.”* The greatest and most effective way of serving is by being good stewards of our gifts. Let's not hide our gifts, but instead use them for God's glory, and demonstrate God's grace by serving others.

⁷ Romans 12:4-5

PRAYER

“Holy Spirit, thank You for the gifts You have given to me. May I use what was given to me for Your glory and to edify the church. Forgive me for being a bad steward of my spiritual gifts, but empower me to bless others and show God’s grace through my service. Thank you for loving me enough to trust me to bless others. In Jesus name...amen.”

Change Your Perspective

(Day 6)

SCRIPTURE

Colossians 3:24-25- “*23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*”⁸

We would be kidding ourselves if we said that we were never out to impress others. Each of us, at one time or another, have tried to do so. If you are married or currently dating someone, you will understand. When you first began to date your spouse, you were aware of the tiniest of details, like the way you dressed, styled your hair, put on makeup, and even your selection of cologne and/or perfume was made to impress. You were on your best behavior, you listened to the other talk, and you even walked her to the door at the end of the night. Is this a bad thing? Not at all. We only become false advertisement if we are no longer doing those things we once did to win him or her over. It’s all about impression! Unfortunately, when it comes to the church, we can do the same things by trying impress those who visit us in hopes that they return and eventually join our fellowship. Is this a bad thing? Not necessarily. We only become false advertisement if we are no longer practicing those things we once did to win them over! Trying to constantly impress and please others will burn anyone out. It can take away your joy and make you feel disingenuous. The apostle Paul helps us destroy this concept of pleasing man by showing us how to change perspective. Notice what he says, “*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.*” This verse should bring us freedom, because it removes us from the obligation of trying to please everybody, and directs our focus on pleasing the Lord. When there is joy in serving the Lord, it becomes easier to serve others. Paul goes on to say, “*Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance.*” No matter who we try to impress and why we try to impress them, they do not have the power to reward eternal or abundant life. Only Jesus can do that. You can live your whole life trying to please and impress others, only to be forgotten in time. The good news is that the Lord has not forgotten! He knows everything you do, especially the things that are done

⁸ NASB

for His glory. Paul concludes by saying, *“It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”* Changing your perspective as to who you are trying to please and impress will bring you freedom and joy. When we change our perspective in trying to please and/or impress man, and aim at pleasing God it allows us to serve others with genuine contentment! Has this been you? Do you find yourself trying to please others for approval? Have you gone out of your way for the sake of impressing others? It’s time to change our perspective! It is Christ in whom you serve. Let us walk in genuine freedom, serving others without the need to impress.

PRAYER

“Father God, teach me how to focus on you when it comes to serving. Change my perspective and give me joy while serving. May I learn to serve You first and serve others without feeling like I have to impress. Thank you for loving me and for allowing me to honor You through service. In Jesus name...amen.”

Walk This Way

(Day 7)

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:10- *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”*⁹

When reading the first ten verses of Ephesians 2, it gives us three important truths. First, it shows us who we were without God (vs. 1-3). Second, it shows us how God saved us from ourselves (vs. 4-9). Third, it shows us what our new position is in Christ Jesus (vs. 10). We were once dead in trespasses and sins, but now we are made alive in Him! We were once lost, but now we are found! We were once blind, but now we spiritually see! When Christ saved us, He not only called us as His own, but He also created us to be His “*workmanship*.” What makes this fact incredible is that God prepared this role for us before we even belonged to Him! Paul uses the word “beforehand” which is the Greek word that means, “*to ordain*.”¹⁰ When the Lord called us to be His workmanship, He ordained us as ministers to do so. This is the beauty of our salvation! We were not saved because of our good works, we were saved to do good works. God is continually creating us into a masterpiece of doing good works in Him. As Christ is the Light of the world,¹¹ we too get to be a light of service to those who are watching. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:16, *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* For this reason, we are to walk in our calling! There is a greater purpose for us in this Christian pilgrimage than to merely attend church service. We are called to attend to and serve the church! This is our purpose- to serve, honor, love, lift up, and assist others as Jesus did. It should be our heart’s desire to please the Lord through serving and also honor Him through worship. Let this new year be the year that you recognize your life’s purpose as you serve as a workman of the Lord. Allow God to continue to create you as His masterpiece for good works, as you proceed in walking in them through obedience.

⁹ NASB

¹⁰ Greek word- “Proetoimazo”

¹¹ John 8:12

PRAYER

“Father God, thank You for creating me for good works before I even knew You. Thank you for the grace You have allowed me to serve You as Your representative. May this new year be a year that I remain obedient in You and to serve others as You did. In Jesus name...amen.”