

Practising Spiritual Disciplines



Giving
Hope
Today



SERVICE

Servanthood • Others • Supportive

Some considerations as you live out a life of true service:

- 1. Imitate Jesus' example of service:** Luke's Gospel records that the disciples had argued about who was the greatest among them (see Luke 9:46). No one wanted to be considered the least! John's Gospel tells us how, during Passover, Jesus seized the opportunity to teach his followers an important lesson. He turned their concept of greatness upside down by taking a towel and basin and washing their feet. Having now demonstrated true greatness, he called them to a life of service: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15 *ESV*).
- 2. Embracing God's concept of service can result in a paradigm shift:** To have a heart for service and to live it out means we are not focused on promotion and authority or concerned about power and control. It's about serving with a spiritual authority that moves beyond a position and title. It's living the way Jesus lived, not seeking to be served but to serve others (see Matthew 20:25-28).
- 3. True service is distinct from self-righteous service:** While self-righteous service requires an immense amount of human energy, true service comes from having a relationship with our heavenly Father. In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard J. Foster says that self-righteous service is concerned with the big project while true service welcomes all opportunities, big and small, to serve. Self-righteous service needs to be noticed and appreciated. True service is happy in secrecy, when the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing (see Matthew 6:3). Self-righteous service is driven by outcome measures. True service is content only in the service.
- 4. Humility and true service are inextricably linked:** The spiritual discipline of service is the best environment for the grace of humility to develop. Humility is not something we can achieve by running after it. Thinking we are humble is a clear sign we don't have this virtue. When we are serving others with pure intentions and not drawing attention to ourselves, we experience profound change in our hearts. Human nature dictates that we want to be recognized for the good we do (see 1 John 2:16), but if we offer service with no thought of recognition to ourselves, the result is the growth of humility.
- 5. True service is both internal and external:** We can do all kinds of acts of service, but unless we understand what it means to be a servant, we have not internalized the spiritual discipline of service. Service must be internal, but it must also be external. For example, honour others with acts of kindness (see Titus 3:2); be a burden-bearer (see Galatians 6:2); care for the lonely (see Philippians 2:4); and seek social justice (see Isaiah 1:17).

My Action Plan

→ Study the discipline of service, beginning with John 13:1-17.

→ Seek out service opportunities, such as befriending a lonely person or volunteering at a Salvation Army shelter.

→ Reflect on the differences between *being* a servant and doing acts of service.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Cut out and keep in your Bible or journal. Allow these verses to mould your idea of service.

"And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15 *ESV*).

"Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you" (1 Samuel 12:24 *ESV*).

"Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?" (1 Kings 3:9 *ESV*).

"Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, 'Great is the Lord, who delights in the welfare of his servant!' " (Psalm 35:27 *ESV*).

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money" (Matthew 6:24 *NLT*).

"Jesus sat down, called the twelve disciples, and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must place himself last of all and be the servant of all' " (Mark 9:35 *GNT*).

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45 *NIV*).

"Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be with me where I am. And my Father will honour anyone who serves me" (John 12:26 *GNT*).

"Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people" (Ephesians 6:7 *NLT*).