

Living The Good Life, Part 8

- **John 13:4-5** He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.
- John is the only gospel writer who tells of this incident, but Luke tells of the argument that led up to it. The strife between His disciples happened as Jesus was serving them the last supper and telling them that He was headed to Calvary!
- **Luke 22:24** And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.
- The world defines greatness in terms of power, possessions, prestige and position. If you are in able to demand service from others, the world thinks you've arrived. And in our 'me-first' culture, acting like a servant is not a very popular idea.
- Jesus, however, taught us to measure greatness not in terms of STATUS but in terms of SERVICE. God determines your greatness by how many people you serve, not how many people serve you. This is so contrary to the world's idea of greatness that the disciples had a hard time understanding it, let alone actually practicing it. They were jockeying for the preeminent position 2000 years ago ... and things haven't changed much, have they?
- Thousands of books have been written on leadership, but only a few on servanthood. There are more than 750 'Halls of Fame' and more than 450 'Who's Who' publications in North America. One of the new phrases making the rounds in Christianity now is 'servant-leader.' Whatever happened to just plain 'servant'? To be like Jesus is to be a servant – that's how He referred to Himself.

WHY ANYONE CAN BE A SERVANT

1. **Real servants simply make themselves AVAILABLE to serve.** They don't fill up their time with other 'trivial pursuits' that could limit their availability. If you only serve when it's convenient for you, you're not a real servant! Living for ministry and living for money are mutually exclusive goals – if you're a servant of God, you can't moonlight for yourself!
2 Timothy 2:4 (NAS) No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

2. **Real servants simply pay attention to NEEDS.** They are always on the lookout for ways to help others. And the Bible teaches that the needs of your church family are to be given preference, not put at the bottom of your 'to-do' list. Even your marriage and family are not eternal institutions, but the church is!
Galatians 6:10 (GWT) Whenever we have the opportunity, we have to do what is good for everyone, especially for the family of believers.
3. **Real servants simply do each task with equal DEDICATION.** The size or outward 'importance' of the task is irrelevant. God never exempts us from the mundane or the menial, because that's a crucial part of our character development. Nothing is beneath a servant!
Colossians 3:23 (NLT) Work hard and cheerfully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.

God is always more interested in WHY we do something than in WHAT we do. Attitudes always count more than achievements.

THE MINDSET OF A SERVANT

1. **Servants think more about OTHERS than about themselves.**

True humility is not thinking less of ourselves but thinking of ourselves less. Servants are self-forgetful; this is what Jesus was talking about when He said, "lose your life."

Philippians 2:4b (MSG) Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

You can't be a servant if you're full of yourself. Real servants don't use their service as a bargaining tool with God or with others. Paul may have been thinking about Jesus' humility before His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion when he wrote this many years later:

Philippians 2:5-8 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:7a (GWT) He emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant.

Thinking like a servant is difficult because it challenges the basic problem of my life – I am by nature selfish! I must choose dozens of times a day between meeting my needs or the needs of others.

I can measure my servant's heart by how I respond when others
TREAT ME LIKE A SERVANT.

Matthew 5:41 (MSG) And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life.

2. Servants think about their WORK, not about what others are doing.

Servants are simply too busy working for the Lord to compare, criticize or compete with other servants. In fact, competition between God's servants is illogical for many reasons:

- We're all on the same team
- Our goal is to make God look good, not ourselves
- We've all been given unique assignments

Galatians 5:26 (MSG) We will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.

When you're busy serving, you don't have time to be critical. Any time spent criticizing others is time that could have been spent ministering. **Real servants don't complain of unfairness!**

Real servants don't resent those not serving, and they don't try to evaluate the Master's other servants. That's because servants see ministry as an opportunity, not an obligation.

Romans 14:4a (GWT) Who are you to criticize someone else's servant? The Lord will determine whether his servant has been successful.

Romans 14:4 (MSG) Do you have any business crossing people off the guest list or interfering with God's welcome? If there are corrections to be made or manners to be learned, God can handle that without your help.

3. Servants base their IDENTITY in Jesus Christ.

Because they remember that they are loved and accepted by grace, servants don't have to prove their worth to anyone else, or jockey for positions that put them in a good light. They willingly accept jobs that insecure people would consider 'beneath' them.

That's why Jesus' example to His disciples was so profound. Washing someone's feet was the equivalent of being a shoeshine boy, a job devoid of status. But Jesus knew who he was, so the task didn't threaten His self-image. Only secure people can serve!

John 13:3-5 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

*His were the planets and stars in the sky
His were the valleys and mountains so high
His, all earth's riches from pole unto pole
Yet He became poor to ransom my soul*

Insecure people are always worrying about how they appear to others; they fear exposure of their weaknesses and hide beneath layers of protective pride. The more insecure you are, the more you will want people to serve you. But when you base your identity on your relationship with God, that allows you to serve others best.

The closer you get to Jesus, the less you need to promote yourself, and the less you need your preferences validated.

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant ... of Jesus Christ

James 1:1 James, a servant of God

Jude 1:1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ

Rev. 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ ... unto his servant John

- **John's eighth snapshot of the Spirit-filled man: He is secure enough to serve!**

The disciples most likely would have been happy to wash Jesus' feet, but they could not conceive of washing each other's feet because that was a task reserved for the lowliest of servants ... and while they all loved Jesus, they didn't love each other THAT much!

- **John 13:14-15** If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.
- **2 Corinthians 4:5** For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.
- **John 13:35 (MSG)** This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.

And at the very end ... there are still servants!

- **Revelation 22:3** And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: