

BIBLE STUDIES - WHO ARE YOU?

SERIES: **NAMES GOD USES FOR CHRISTIANS**
“A good name is to be more desired than great wealth.” (Prov. 22:1)

Lesson #3 **“SERVANT”**

“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” (John 12:26)

We are living in what has been called the “Era of Media Made Celebrities”; ordinaries who have been made extra-ordinaries simply by being seen. The principal promoters of the celebrity syndrome are movies and television. Consequently, celebrities are held up as standards of fame and fortune and young people, especially, are susceptible to such stimuli. Unfortunately, some adults are as well.

Jesus’ message and ministry did not promote the celebrity syndrome. Quite the contrary, His emphasis was on the opposite end of the spectrum; He enunciated and exemplified humility and servanthood. There is no greater honor that can be given to Christians than to call them “servants,” for that was the title used for our Savior:

- Isaiah 53:11 - “He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous *Servant* shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.”
- Matt. 12:18 - “Behold, My *Servant* whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles.” (Quote from Isaiah 42:18-19).

The New Testament is a handbook for servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us thumb through this handbook and pinpoint some of the instructions for saintly servants. We will look at the attitude, aim and actions of the Lord’s servants.

I. THE CHRISTIAN SERVANT’S ATTITUDE.

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” (Col.3:23, 24)

The context in which the above words are found, is addressing earthly masters and slaves. Slavery was prevalent in the Roman Empire and Paul is addressing Christian masters and slaves. However, the principles he articulated are applicable to servants of the Lord Jesus Christ as well.

Paul’s admonition deals with the attitude with which a servant should serve. Note some of the attitudinal characteristics contained in the verses:

A. We Should Serve Heartily.

“Whatever you do, do it heartily.” Heartless service should never characterize servants

of the Most High God! I have witnessed some Christians who served with hands but not with heart. They went about their ministry in an atmosphere of duty and drudgery, holy hum-drum, and a just-get-it-over-with, joyless servitude. That type of service is like serving iced coffee on a cold morning! God rewards hot-hearted service!

Eugene Peterson's *The Message* says, "Don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Work from the heart for your real Master, for God."

B. We Should Serve Conscientiously.

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men." Whatever service we render, we should be conscious of the fact that in that capacity we are serving "the Lord." Whether doctor, lawyer, merchant; dish-washer, plumber, truck driver, teacher, waitress, etc. we are to be aware that we are serving the Lord.

The attitude that we display in our Christian service is communicated in a number of ways:

- By facial expression – a cloudy face, like a cloudy sky, indicates that a storm is brewing;
- The voice – a harsh or sharp voice with no warmth in it is indicative of an unhappy person. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matt. 12:34)
- One's body language communicates one's attitude. A person who serves in a slouchy and slovenly manner does not advertise a happy spirit.
- Attitude is represented in the quality of service rendered. The workman's work reflects the workman's attitude.

Warren W. Wiersbe writes, "A Christian worker ought to be the best worker on the job. He ought to obey orders and not argue. He ought to serve Christ and not the boss only, and he ought to work whether anybody is watching or not. If he follows these principles, he will receive his reward from Christ even if his earthly master (his boss) does not recognize him or reward him." (The Bible Exposition Commentary, Vol.2, p.144)

Our attitude about life and labor will determine, more than any one thing, whether we succeed or fail. Charles R. Swindoll writes, "Words can never adequately convey the incredible impact of our attitude toward life. The longer I live the more convinced I become that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it." (*Strengthening Your Grip*)

C. We Should Serve Faithfully.

"...for you serve the Lord Christ." Understanding that, as Christian servants, we are serving the Lord Christ, we should be faithful in whatever capacity we serve. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." (I Cor.4:1-2) Here, in this context, Paul is speaking primarily of those who minister the Word of God. However, the principle applies to all areas of work. In Christian service especially, it is rather easy to determine if one's service is perfor-

med out of mere duty or if the service flows from a heart of love for the One Whom we serve.

Illust. The most exemplary and beautiful picture of servanthood is seen in the Lord Jesus washing the disciple's feet in the Upper Room. Here is the Lord of glory, on hands and knees, crawling around a table washing dirty feet. It brings tears to my eyes every time I concentrate upon the scene. It also motivates me to follow His example of servanthood and gladly serve in The Fellowship of The Pan And Towel.

II. **THE CHRISTIAN SERVANT'S AIM.**

We are to aim at service that is acceptable to our Master. In order to do that we need to keep in mind that:

A. **The Servant's Aim Is To Follow His Master.**

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me" (John 12:26a)

We are to serve as we follow and follow as we serve. Jesus does not separate service from following or visa versa. It is "both and" not "either or." As we walk through this world we are to live like Christ and labor for Christ. No pillar saints, please!

Pillar Saints were Christian ascetics in the early days of the Byzantine Empire. Some of them lived on top of pillars to be separate from the world around them. They believed that the mortification of their bodies would help ensure the salvation of their souls. The first stylite ((from Greek *stylos*, "pillar"), was probably Simeon Stylites The Elder who climbed on a pillar in Syria in 423 and did not come down until his death 37 years later. Simeon discovered a pillar which had survived amongst ruins, formed a small platform at the top, and upon this determined to live out his life. It has been stated that, as he seemed to be unable to avoid escaping the world horizontally, he may have tried to escape it vertically. No one can follow or serve by living on a pedestal!

Following Christ means that we are in the world but not of it in the sense that we partake of its evils. (John 17:15; I Cor. 5:10) We are witnesses, salt and light and as such we follow as we serve and serve as we follow.

B. **The Servant's Aim Is To Company With His Master.**

"....and where I am, there My servant will be also." (John 12:26b)

WWJD is a popular way of asking, "What Would Jesus Do?" That is a good question for all of the Savior's servants to ask. Another is, WWJG - "Where Would Jesus Go?" That question is answered by Jesus: "where I am, there My servant will be also." If with Jesus we are always in the right place, at the right time for the right purpose!

C. **The Servant's Aim Is To Exalt His Master.**

"For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your

servants for Jesus' sake." (2 Cor 4:5-6) Our service should not rendered in a way that purposefully draws attention to ourselves, but to our Lord and Savior.

D. The Servant's Aim Is To Please His Master.

"No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." (II Tim. 2:4) The analogy changes from "servant" to "soldier" but the principle is the same.

Choosing to do only that which pleases oneself is a mark of one who has never been mastered by the Master! When we meet the Master and surrender to Him, ever after our purpose in life should be to please Him. Paul prayed for the Colossian Christians and gave as the reason for doing so "that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way." (Col.1:10)

The servant's attitude and aim are manifested in her/his actions. Let us briefly review some of the commendable actions that a godly servant evidences.

III. THE CHRISTIAN SERVANT'S ACTIONS.

"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth." (II Tim. 2:24-25)

A. The Servant Of The Lord Must Serve Gladly - "not quarrel."

A quarreling person is not a glad person. A chip on the shoulder is the heaviest load a man can carry. It sours the spirit, ruins relationships and makes work twice as difficult. The Psalmist instructs us to "Serve the LORD with gladness." (Ps.100:2) He serves badly who does not serve gladly.

B. The Servant Of The Lord Must Serve Gently - "be gentle."

Paul himself, was a hard working, faithful and exemplarily servant of the Lord. He wrote to the Thessalonian church, "we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children." (I Thess.2:7)

Picture, if you can, this ex-Roman soldier who was not so gentle, especially when he was supervising the killing of Stephen, being "gentle as a nursing mother." What a change in his demeanor when he met the Master! This is a far different approach to Christian service than I have seen in some who are dogmatic, domineering, dictatorial and bullying. This reflects badly upon our Master who is the meek "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

C. The Servant Of The Lord Must Serve Patiently - be "patient";

"Patience is the will or ability to wait or endure without complaint; steadiness; perseverance in the performance of a task." – (Webster's New World College Dictionary)

The servant of the Lord serves people and serving people tests one's patience like nothing else! Patience implies the bearing of suffering, provocation, delay, hardship,

tediousness, disappointment, reversals, etc.

V. Raymond Edman, writing in *The Disciplines of Life* penned this couplet:

“O human soul, God’s working plan
Goes on, nor needs the aid of man!
Stand still, and see!
Be still, and know!”

D. The Servant Of The Lord Must Serve Humbly - “in humility.”

Our Savior is the supreme example of humble service: “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death.” (Phil.2:8)

“Humility is the first duty and the highest virtue of the creature, and the root of every virtue. And so pride, or the loss of this humility, is the root of every sin and evil. This humility is not a thing that will come of itself, but that it must be made the object of special desire and prayer and faith and practice. As we study the word, we shall see what very distinct and oft-repeated instructions Jesus gave His disciples on this point.”
- Andrew Murray

What is more obnoxious than a haughty, proud and vain person professing to be a servant of the One Who is the personification of humility?

“Boasting excluded, pride I abase;
I’m only a sinner saved by grace.”

CONCLUSION

What an honor it is for us to be called a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ! When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, his opening words were: “Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ....”

Contrary to the teaching of some, serving the Lord does not make us a saint. Sainthood is not a designation that is earned but it is bestowed upon those believing and receiving the Lord Jesus as Savior. If we are saints we should be serving the One who made us a saint.

Faithful service will be rewarded. “If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” (John 12:26) We may be dishonored here but no deed done for the Savior will go unrewarded. “If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.” (Matt.10:42) What will our Master say to faithful servants? “Well done, good and faithful servant.” (Matt.25:21)

A man was overheard praying, “O Lord, use me in an advisory capacity.” I suppose there are more who want to be an advisor than a servant. But remember what Jesus said to us all: “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” (John 12:26)

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