

Essentials

Serving and Praying

Week of August 23

Give one point or verse that spoke to you personally from the teaching video, sermon or Scripture this week.

Read Romans 12:1-13

1) Serving

In the very first verse Paul pleads that we give our bodies to God because of all He has done for us.

Name two things God has done for you in the past and recently.

Jesus is called God's servant through Scripture (Acts 3:13, Acts 4:27, Isaiah 53). In our consumerist society the idea of being a servant is not very appealing. During Paul's life, being a servant was even more humbling because servants were rarely considered more than property and definitely didn't have any labor protection laws as we know today. The Jews were expecting a Messiah who would come and rally them to a militant victorious battle, instead Jesus came telling them to humble themselves as servants and love their enemies.

How do you personally serve others?

In verse 2 Paul says, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."

What do the behaviors and customs of this world want us to believe about God and His command to serve others?

How have Scripture and The Holy Spirit changed the way you think about serving?

There may be some of you reading this who have provided diligent service for many years and it has been abused. Or, you are in a demanding family or work situation that requires you to serve others continuously. You often find yourself serving to the point of exhaustion and frustration.

Why do we serve? Who provides us with the power, faith and strength to serve?

How do you make wise decisions surrounding rhythms of rest and work?

Often we measure the success of our service through the response we receive from those we have served. But Paul lifts up that the measure of success for our service isn't how much we please others—the measure of success for our service is how we glorify and please God with the faith and strength He has given us.

Read: 1 Peter 4:10-11

What is the difference between serving out of "the strength and energy that God supplies" and serving out of "our own strength and energy?" Give some practical examples of each.

Read: Matthew 20:25-28

How can you serve more like Jesus this week? Is it signing up during our Joshua Celebration to serve in a ministry through church? Is it in your family or circle of friends? Perhaps it is creating a rest/work rhythm from the demanding serving role you have? Is it asking God to help you serve out of a heart of gratitude and humility in the service He has already called you to?

2) Praying

One of the most quoted passages of Scripture on prayer is James 5:16, "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."

There are two mistakes we can make with our own sin. We can focus on it so much that we paralyze ourselves and minimize God's grace, or we can ignore it so completely that we continually fall into patterns of worldly behavior and minimize God's judgment. Confessing our sins in a trust-worthy relationship with another Christian is a healthy practice for us.

How often do you confess your sins with another person and pray for each other for healing?

Why do we not place more importance on prayer?

The second part of James 5:16 says that, "prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." However, Romans 3:10 says, "No one is righteous—not even one."

How are anyone's prayers effective if none of us are righteous?

Read: Romans 3:24

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Text: Romans 12:1-13, Exodus 4:1-5

The Plain Truth:

If you are going to change your _____
something needs to change _____.

Prayer isn't a gift only reserved for those "righteous" people with flowery language. Prayer is essential to our relationship with God. It is a two-way dialogue where we adore, confess, give thanks, and ask for God to intercede in not only our lives, but in the lives of those we know. Intercessory prayer is when we pray on the behalf of others. There is no magic formula or repetitious superstition that needs to be completed. You simply need to take time to speak and listen to God.

Imagine that Jesus is literally sitting in an empty chair beside you. He says, "I heard you call me. What do you need to talk about? I'm listening." What would you say?

Paul said to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). His statement doesn't mean we should have our eyes closed and heads bowed all day. Ann Voskamp wrote, "Praying with eyes wide open is the only way to pray without ceasing." We should ask Him to help us be in a living awareness of God's presence throughout our day. The more aware we are of His presence, the more we speak to Him—the more we listen to Him, the more loving we are to those around us.

Our posture in prayer should be one of complete comfort and intimacy with our "Daddy" God. Only in more fully grasping His complete love for us can we learn to serve others out of that same love.

So maybe instead of asking this week, "Who do you need to serve?," the more appropriate question would be, "Who is God asking you to love?"

One Year Bible Reading

August 23: Job 8:1-11:20, 1 Corinthians 15:1-28, Psalm 38:1-22, Proverbs 21:28-29
August 24: Job 12:1-15:35, 1 Corinthians 15:29-58, Psalm 39:1-13, Prov. 21:30-31
August 25: Job 16:1-19:29, 1 Corinthians 16:1-24, Psalm 40:1-10, Proverbs 22:1
August 26: Job 20:1-22:30, 2 Corinthians 1:1-11, Psalm 40:11-17, Proverbs 22:2-4
August 27: Job 23:1-27:23, 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11, Psalm 41:1-13, Prov. 22:5-6
August 28: Job 28:1-30:31, 2 Corinthians 2:12-17, Psalm 42:1-11, Proverbs 22:7
August 29: Job 31:1-33:33, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, Psalm 43:1-5, Proverbs 22:8-9

August 22 & 23, 2015