

# December 2002: The True Servants of God

by Aaron Greenway

What is true service? What is true love?

Several years ago an old childhood friend of mine and I sat in his living room talking. It just so happened that, at that time, he was not in any particular church serving on a full time basis as he had done before. He spent many months praying, asking God for an opportunity to serve. My friend was a ministry "war horse" and proved it by constantly attempting new ministry projects. As we began to talk about these things and the fact that he was in ministry "limbo", Robert (this is not his real name) began to express his disappointments, feeling that the Lord was disappointed with him because he was not active in a ministry, leadership position in the church, nor leading others to Christ at that particular point in time. He felt stagnated. My response to him was, "Robert, perhaps God is preparing you for the next step. You are taking time to rest so that you are able to go on." Hopefully, this encouraged him!

There are many today that equate service with "doing things". Let us go for a moment to the book of Luke 2:36-38 at the birth of Christ:

Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

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A heart of service does not stem from the obligation to do something. There are thousands in the ministry today who are very active to the point that their ministry has become their god. There are countless believers who love ministry and do not love God. I know leaders in the Church who are so gung-ho for ministry that they would sacrifice the spiritual health of the sheep just to get them out there doing something. They see spiritual laziness as an opportunity for a pep-rally and not an excuse to stop to understand why they are lazy. Tell me, how can one who has been abused in his/her past effectively minister to the abused unless that crippled part of them has been healed? How can one be motivated to win people to Christ if he/she does not care about the lost? Only these things can be remedied by knowing intimately the heart of God and surrendering ourselves each and every day. And a heart of service comes from a continual renewal, a continual healing of the Spirit of God in the heart of a person. It has nothing to do with an American, work-ethic mentality. Unfortunately, that is exactly what ministry has become in this country and even in other places around the world. Anna was truly a servant of God because Christ, the coming King, was the center of her entire existence.

Now, as God fills our hearts with a passion and a deep love for Him, this is when we begin to overflow and our lives begin spilling onto others. This is when we have a mandate to fulfill the Great Commission, to be a blessing to those around us. Isn't it interesting that Jesus told his disciples to remain in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came? Did the waiting relieve the disciples from ministry responsibility? Absolutely not! But it is the waiting, the fasting, the time alone with God that prepares our hearts. How less effective would a pastor be if he were not a man of prayer, if he did not take time alone with his Creator. Ephesians 5:18 says to "be filled with the Holy Spirit". This is a continual process and our witness depends on it. This is why I believe that every pastor and every minister in every church around the world be granted a vacation once a year. Who ministers to the leaders? Who nourishes them?

During the Christmas season let us allow the Spirit of God to show us that ministry begins with a tender heart toward God and comes to fruition in our service to others. It is not a competition among believers. It is not doing without caring. At the same time, it is obedience to the Lord, testing our love for Him (John 14:15). If we really love Jesus, we will want to share it with everyone. If we really love Jesus we will do anything He asks of us. Service is adapting ourselves to spiritual sensitivity so that when God is doing something special, like Anna, we will see it in living color. How many times have I missed God's heart by being too caught up in doing, sacrificing my time alone with Him? We can blind ourselves this way.

Today, we can begin to reflect more and more upon "true service" and give God hearts that have been wounded, hearts of rebellion, hearts that are lazy, so that God can turn all of that into a powerful testimony for Him.