

July 2006: Getting Connected Through Service

by Aaron Greenway

When I reflect on the meaning of service, the first example that comes to mind is Jesus. The King of kings and the Lord of lords came to serve. In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 20:28, „Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." The person, the actions and the words of Christ still fascinate me almost like there is something deeper there, something I want to know more about and act on. It amazes me how He washed the disciple's feet, an act that only a servant would have done, someone of lower class. The fact is that Jesus served when it really wasn't convenient.

A few weeks ago we went to help a couple to pack their things so they could move. We had just gotten through teaching school for the year and were about to leave for Laredo, Texas to do a concert/missions presentation. But this couple had really been a blessing to my wife mentoring her during the first few years of her Christian life. They taught her how to be a woman of God. Well, after loading the trailer with all of the furniture we all sat down together to talk. They thanked us for coming to help them and told us something profound, that true service requires sacrifice. When someone serves, much of the time he will have to sacrifice his energy, his money, his time, and many times he will give from the little that he has. One thing is to give from what we have. Another thing is to give from what we don,t have.

Now I am not saying that one shouldn't give if the Lord has blessed him with the resources, but for some reason Jesus was always fascinated with the people that had very little and yet gave. Do you remember the widow that gave the two small copper coins? Jesus responded, „I tell you the truth,

The time that we put into serving and getting to know others in the church is time well spent in our own spiritual development because the Lord never wanted for our spiritual growth to happen apart from his Body. Our sanctification depends on rubbing shoulders with others. You cannot grow properly without someone loving you and pouring their lives into your life. Imagine if the person that led you to Christ had failed to share the Good News with you when you most needed it. Brothers and sisters, this is going to require that we lower our defenses, that we open our hearts to others. We can do this wisely aware that others may want to come in and harm us, but also praying that God would send people our way who will bless us and spiritually build us up as well as us building them up.

this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything~all she had to live on% (Mark 12:43-44). Surely, God has to be teaching us how to be servants. He is preparing my wife and me to be missionaries. When I worked as a valet parker parking cars at the restaurants, many people would come to eat. When they left, I discovered that many of the well-to-do people would give me less than those who were not. The ones that came in their luxury cars in many cases were tighter with their money. I always wondered why this was.

Well, the same applies to „time%. How much time do I give to people? Many folks want to serve but they don,t seem to have the time. For two years of my life I worked three jobs, two as a teacher and one as a valet (like I mentioned before). I would work 60-70 hours and travel over 600 miles a week. For this reason, my pastor recommended that I get a full-time job in the public schools. This has freed me up to serve in my church and in my own ministry. It also has to do with the culture. So many times, we are so consumed with what is going on in our lives that we don,t have any time for others. It is no wonder that so many have become a statistic for divorce. More than fifty percent of all marriages fall part. Why? Because no one gives an account to anyone and no one really knows anyone. You can have a structure in place in your church or para- church organization to foster fellowship and service, but nothing can take the place of the effort itself. Many of us have seen these problems everywhere. The „busyness of America% has become its curse because people have less and less time to develop relationships and serve others, and so the Enemy can come in and cause a lot of trouble. Because Satan does his best work in the dark, it is virtually a „piece of cake% taking full advantage of those who do not get involved with other believers. Beware of the „Lone Ranger%.

God has been teaching me that the more time, money, and effort I invest in others, the more spiritually healthy I am. However, the more I hoard my time, money, and my love, the more inwardly-focused I am and therefore more susceptible to the Enemy,s attacks because I am less connected to the body of Christ and with people in general. I just got through reading Paul,s Epistles to Timothy and I marvel at the love that Paul had for this spiritual son. Paul and Timothy knew one another very well and they spoke about other brothers with whom they served. These weren't just superficial-type

relationships, and without anyone of these brothers, Paul could not have done what he did for the Lord. Our ministry depends on our contact with others. It depends on our serving from the heart because if not, who says we would serve the unbeliever. This contact acts as a buffer between us and any spiritual disaster in our marriages, in our ministries, and in our relationship with the Lord.

But it is not just serving the family of God, but it is also revealing to other who we are. This can be very threatening to others who seem to serve but the moment you get too close to them, even to shake their hand, it becomes clear that you will not get far. Something in their life is hurting them and they don,t want you to know about it, so they shut you out completely. Maybe they do it because their motives are not right. Maybe they do it because they are ashamed or embarrassed. Only God knows their heart. But the result is the same: they are putting themselves at spiritual risk by cutting themselves off from other believers. I am convinced that each person that serves in God,s family should invest their time in getting to know the ones they are serving. Otherwise, they are only doing a job. However, this does not mean that one should try to serve everyone. This is not realistic but we can serve the ones that God has put in front of us. We don,t need to run to the other end of the sanctuary to greet a visitor when there is a visitor right behind us. When the opportunity to bless arises, let us not be afraid but rather take advantage of it.

So where does that leave us? The time that we put into serving and getting to know others in the church is time well spent in our own spiritual development because the Lord never wanted for our spiritual growth to happen apart from his Body. Our sanctification depends on rubbing shoulders with others. You cannot grow properly without someone loving you and pouring their lives into your life. Imagine if the person that led you to Christ had failed to share the Good News with you when you most needed it. Brothers and sisters, this is going to require that we lower our defenses, that we open our hearts to others. We can do this wisely aware that others may want to come in and harm us, but also praying that God would send people our way who will bless us and spiritually build us up as well as us building them up. Whether it is a Paul, a Timothy or a Barnabas, we can get connected today. This is how we protect ourselves from the Enemy's attacks. Serving is getting to know others and at the same time we smooth over all of the rough edges in our lives.

„But if we live in the light as He is in the light, we have communion one with another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin% (I John 1:7).

Something to ponder...

Your brother,

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