

MESSAGE MINDER

September 5, 2010

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

I Peter 4:10-11



Service: Are You a Giver or a Taker?

By Jonathan Stone

Israel wanted a king. They wanted an earthly ruler so that they might be like the other nations. God knew that Israel would ask for a king (see Deut. 17:14-20), and when they did he had a sobering warning about the nature of earthly kings.

Samuel warned the Israelites that the king they were asking for would ultimately be a **taker**. He told them that the king would take their sons, take their daughters, take their fields, take their vineyards, take their olive groves, take their grain, take their servants, take their cattle, take their donkeys, take their flocks, and ultimately treat them like slaves to be used to grow his earthly kingdom (1 Sam. 8:9-18). Since the fall of man earthly kings have always essentially been **takers**.

Juxtaposed to the biblical picture of earthly kings is the portrait of our heavenly king. In Philippians 2:5-11 we see that the pattern of Christ (from which we are instructed to pattern our own lives) takes the form of a being a **giver** instead of a **taker**. Jesus had every right to come down to earth, proclaim his divine authority, and demand our allegiance. Yet, he chose a different way, a pattern not found in earthly rulers.

First, he chose to lay down his heavenly glory in order to come to us in human form (vv. 5-6). This one step demonstrates profound humility in the nature of Christ. We could spend eternity dwelling on this one act, his willingness to relinquish his heavenly glory in order to journey with us on earth. However, he did not stop there.

He took a second step, and took this pattern one step further. He could have appeared to us in royal robes and all the glory of earthly kings. Instead, he came in the form of a servant (v. 7).

This is beyond our comprehension. Yet, he still did not stop there. He took a third step, and took our pattern still one step further. He humbled himself in obedience to death (v. 8a). How glorious the love and humility of our savior! Yet, amazingly, he still did not stop there. He took a fourth step and took our pattern still one step further. He did not just die, but became a curse for us that we might be redeemed (v. 8b, see also Gal. 3:13). Which pattern are you following, the pattern of earthly kings or the pattern of your heavenly king? Are you a **taker** or a **giver**?

Application: To Whom Shall I Serve?

Consider your personal relationships. What acts of service could you offer to them this week and in the weeks to come? Consider your spouse, children, neighbors, colleagues, boss, extended family, friend, church acquaintance, and stranger. Pick 3 or 4 of these individuals and commit yourself to offering at least one kind act of service to them.

“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.”

C. T. Studd

Prayer: Moving Beyond Acts of Kindness

Service is more than random acts of kindness. In fact, actions that grow out of true Christian service are only an outward sign of an inward reality. As we grow in Christ we grow in his attitude, a natural disposition towards the concern and well-being of others. Focus your prayers this week on growing in your inner disposition toward others. Ask God to give you the grace to let go of your personal concerns in order to have your spiritual eyes opened to the needs of those around you.

Questions: 10 Things to Ask Yourself

- 1.) What am I striving for that keeps me from serving others?
- 2.) What things am I holding onto?
- 3.) How can I let go of those things?
- 4.) How can I rearrange my priorities?
- 5.) Do I need an accountability partner in order to take these steps?
- 6.) How would others measure my service?
- 7.) What can I immediately do to make changes in these areas?
- 8.) Have I thanked God for his servant's heart?
- 9.) Am I willing to follow the pattern of Christ?
- 10.) Is my life leaving a legacy of giving or a legacy of taking?

“One thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.”

Albert Schweitzer

