



Light from the Word

Serve One Another

Editor's Note: The Bible uses the term “one another” multiple times and it is clear God is very interested in our relationships. Jesus taught that the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. In 2018, we will look at several of the “one another’s” in the Bible.

Theme verse: *“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”*¹

As believers, we enjoy liberty in the best and highest sense of the word. Through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross we have been freed from the condemnation of sin and given hope of eternal life. We are recipients of the most amazing exchange in that the sinless Son of God took our sin upon Himself in order that we might go free. *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*² Yes, grace is truly amazing.

The cleansed sinner arises, as it were, from kneeling at that old rugged cross and asks the penetrating and appropriate question, *“What wilt thou have me to do?”*³ The Saviour with outstretched, nail-scarred hands answers, *“Love one another; as I have loved you.”*⁴ Had He simply said, *“love one another,”* we might stop at the extent of human love limited by the goodness of the other.⁵ But—and so fitting in light of His sacrifice—He added, *“as I have loved you,”* raising the bar to the amazing, sacrificial giving of oneself demonstrated on a Roman cross.

Among the many ways we are called by Jesus to love one another—and we are exploring several of them in these editorials this year—perhaps the most profound is His example of being a servant. Paul reminds the Philippians of the incredible humbling that Jesus experienced as He descended in status from the Son of God (a position He retained despite the humbling) to being made *“in the likeness of man,”*

to taking on the *“form of a servant,”* and eventually becoming *“obedient unto death,”* and (again, amazingly), *“even the death of the cross!”*⁶

Jesus changed the world by dying and He taught those around Him to become like Him—that is, in the role and manner of a disciple. In His Great Commission, He commissioned the original disciples to essentially go and make more disciples. So as believers in Jesus today we must be becoming more like Him day by day. We must become servants, as He did.

In a tender moment shortly before He was to go to the cross, Jesus gathered the disciples and humbled Himself even further by removing His garments and taking a basin of water with which He washed their feet. They were rightly stunned by this action—Peter even tried vainly to stop it—and must have wondered at its meaning. They must have leaned in especially hard to hear what He’d say about this—His words now punctuated by humble service with a deep ability to penetrate their hearts, *“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.”*⁷

As Christian disciples some twenty centuries after these events we are deeply moved by the actions of our Lord and Master. We desire to seek application of this command on a daily basis. Does that mean we will perform the physical act of washing the feet of another? It might—and believers have found meaning in doing so, especially when great hurts have been experienced and the act is done as a symbol of reconciliation. But the teaching must also reach past the literal act so that we ask what washing feet means in the broadest sense and application. What unexpected act of service should I perform—not as an ostentatious display but in demonstration of the profound lesson learned at the cross? What words fitly spoken might I offer to provide comfort, healing, and forgiveness where

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man's reason would suggest I am justified in remaining silent? How might I be able to humbly clean the dust of earthly carnality from my brother's feet—and permit my brother to wash mine? How does my interaction with every man, woman, and child—regardless of their station in life—reflect the heart of one who is mindful of the great price with which he has been bought? *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”*⁸

As we consider much of the American culture around us, we can conclude that having the heart of a servant is not at the forefront of the messages with which we are bombarded each day. Modern

advertising is especially focused on meeting our own needs, e.g. this car, vacation, clothing, etc. will make us feel good. We are told that fulfilling our own needs and becoming our own person will satisfy us. And yet we need only look at the many broken lives around us to see the embedded lie. Jesus' words ring true, *“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it”*⁹ and *“what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”*¹⁰

The heart of every individual knows and recognizes the deeper truths of God. A closer look at how people respond—often including special highlights by the news media—when sacrificial love is demonstrated reveals a respect for such “counter-cultural” actions. Examples can be found of forgiveness in the face of great loss, putting one's life at risk to save others, and serving in and among the poor as one's life's work. And it is in those humble acts of service

that the love of Christ is most plainly seen.

In closing, we have tremendous freedom (liberty) in Christ. But we are warned not to use it, *“for an occasion to the flesh, but by love (to) serve one another.”*¹¹ And as we ponder the sacrificial love of the one who humbled Himself so dramatically, we are moved by Paul's call to action to, *“present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service [emphasis added].”*¹²

Endnotes:

¹ Gal. 5:13

² 2 Cor. 5:21

³ Acts 9:6

⁴ John 13:34

⁵ Rom. 5:7

⁶ Phil. 2:7-8

⁷ John 13:14

⁸ 1 Cor. 6:19-20

⁹ Luke 9:24

¹⁰ Mark 8:36

¹¹ Gal. 5:13

¹² Rom. 12:1