

# The Extent of Serving, Praying, Giving, Worshiping . .

## What Our Behavior Says About Us!

If we were to write down all the ways we relate to God, we might have such things on our list as worshiping, giving, serving, praying, communing, and the like. The extent to which we are involved in these ways of relating to God varies from individual to individual. We will also find, for a particular person, that the extent varies from one expression of these relationships to another. For example, our prayer life might be deep and expansive while our serving may be superficial. This can result from neglect of various areas of growth and development because we are driven by what pleases us rather than heeding what God is doing. This also can result from different levels of maturity in our Christian walk as God deals with us in various areas of the ways we relate to Him. One would logically conclude that God is working in us (Phil. 2:13) to bring about a development of the character of Christ (Rom 8:28-29) in all our *being* and consequently in all our *behaviors*.

Probably the most visible expression of the way we relate to God is in serving. Jesus had much to say about serving and He recognized that the extent of ones service can vary. In one discourse on serving and the results to the one who serves is found in Matt 20:26-28.

But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your *minister*; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your *servant*: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Jesus made a distinction between being “great” and being “chief.” Greatness (in verse 26) can develop from ministry to other people. The Greek word used there is *diakonos* and means “one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master.” Of course this could be a minister or a servant. On the other hand, if one would desire to be chief,

then a greater commitment is involved. Rather than just being a minister, the route is being a bond slave. The Greek word use here is *doulos* and means “a slave, bondman, man of servile condition.” Strong’s concordance also says that the word is related to “one who gives himself up to another’s will, those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing his cause among men, and one devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests.” This two-fold commitment and result is seen again in verse 28 where Jesus talked of His own mission. He came not to be ministered to but to minister AND to give His life a ransom for many. The Greek word for “give” is *didomi* and can mean any or all of the following: to give something to someone of one’s own accord, to give one something to his advantage, to bestow a gift, to grant, give to one asking, let have, to supply, furnish, necessary things, to give over, deliver. Notice the similarity in this meaning and that of a description of a bond slave — “one who gives himself up. . .” Jesus is recognized as being great by the ministry He delivered to people in healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, and feeding the hungry. However, it was in His demonstration of being a bond slave that He is recognized as Chief — number one. We see the behavior of a slave in Jesus as He gives Himself up in His death on the Cross. It is in this atoning work of His death, burial and resurrection that He proves that He is the Worthy Lamb, the Anointed One of God, the Son of God.

In addition, we see in Romans 12:1 the word “service” used. This is an act of service (*latreia* in the Greek) and refers to the service and worship of God according to the requirements of the Levitical law. This is service with responsibility.

These three definitions of service and

servants give a picture of that which we do with regard to God's call on our lives. Though we have focused on "serving," the distinctions of the extent of our involvement could apply to the other expressions of our relationship with God – worshiping, giving, general behavior, etc.

- Some things we do are done from a sense of obligation. This would be the *latreia* service. (There is *no commendation* for such service since it is a requirement -- the minimum amount. See also the passage in Luke 17:7-10.) An example of such an obligation is tithing.
- We do other things from the heart because of the needs of other that touch us. This would be *diakanos* service. (The result is to be considered "great.")
- The ultimate acts are not done because of obligation nor is it something we have recognized and have a heart for, but it is because of our devotion (read that love) for one to whom we are totally committed. This is the *doulos* service. This is giving motivated by "whose we are" rather than "what we can do" and "what we have." Those who serve in this way are identified with the Chief. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, that you have love one for another."

The **latreia** service is living according to the letter of the law (God's word said and I will do it). The **diakanos** service is living according the spirit of the law that fulfills the requirements of the law by loving my neighbor as myself. The **duolos** service operates according to the New Commandment of Jesus where He told us to love one another even as He loved us.

All of the above is contrary to our basic nature and to our conditioning. As babies we learn to expect that we are to be served (given to, pleaded with, etc). We expect to "grow out" of that attitude and as we mature we do get over the idea that we must be served. Some outgrow the immature attitude better than others. All of us retain a latent (if not overt) expectation that we are to be served. It is one thing to know (in our minds) that we have no right to expect someone to do things for us; however, our inner expectation and desire is that someone will serve us. Being converted and having the mind of Christ is the only true solution for the in-born attitude of thinking we are superior. (In thinking this way, we are putting ourselves in the place of God which is the expression of our old sin nature.) We must be transformed so that we know our place as servants and never lose sight of who we are — we are bought with a price, we are not our own.

As servants of the Master, we can be expected to be equipped for the tasks He has for us. As worshipers, as those who pray, as givers, as those who daily commune with God, we find that He has also equipped us and enables us to go beyond obligation, to go beyond greatness, but to be seated with the Chief Himself in the heavenlies. We must find and use the spiritual gifts, the capabilities, the material possessions, the time we have, etc. because these are the tools of God's servants (worshipers, givers, etc.).

SEE ALSO THE MOTIVE BASED  
DISTINCTION IN THE TABLE ON PAGE 3.

MOTIVE BASED DISTINCTIONS					
Spiritual Value	NEGATIVE		NEUTRAL	POSITIVE	
Motives	Pride	Guilt	Obligation	Care	Love
Why Give?	To be seen	Penance	Required	Who You Are	Whose You Are
Servant Type	Rebellious	Disobedient	Hired Help	Steward	Bond Slave
Extent of Involvement	Resisting	Detachment	Superficial	Engaged	Immersed
Outcome [Our View]	Fame	Salved Conscience	Fulfilled Duty	Expression of Gratitude	Act of Worship
Reward [God's View]	God's Resistance	God's Conviction	God's Blessing	Considered Great	Identified with Jesus
General Behavior	Amoral	Deciding for Self What is Good & Evil	Law	Belief Determines Behavior*	Whose We Are
Commentary	A	B	C	D	E

\* As we believe in our heart, so are we. Descartes said "I think, therefore, I exist." What you think determines who you are in your existence.

### A. Giving When Our Motive is Pride

An example of someone giving out of pride and "to be seen of others" could be a very *rich* person who makes national news about the great amount he or she gives to some worthy cause. However, this could also apply to a *poor* person who gives only a little but makes sure everyone knows they are giving. They may even advertise their giving with lapel pins or bumper stickers. The "Servant Type" is characterized as *Rebellious* in that their motivation is to bring glory to themselves rather than to God. Such giving is in the same vein as the early builders of Babel who wished to make a "name" for themselves. However, God's response is to resist the proud. The general behavior may not be characterized as "immoral" but as "amoral" since the question of morality does not enter the picture.

### B. Giving When Our Motive is Guilt

Giving out of guilt can cover the spectrum of being ostentatious or *showy* (this may overlap with giving from a motive of pride) to being *secretive*. Guilt may stem from situations that could run the gamut of sins of omission (failing to meet obligations) to sins of commission. Some people exhibit this kind of giving by feeling compelled to put in a token gift

every time an offering plate is passed. They may also feel compelled to give a token contribution to beggars on the street, give to solicitation for contributions that come in the mail, and even may be led to make large (even anonymous) contributions to "good" causes (including church programs) as an act of atonement for past and perhaps ongoing sins in their lives. God responds by continuing to bring conviction and the sense of guilt does not go away. The general behavior could be characterized as operating on the basis of deciding for one's self what is good and what is evil.

### C. Giving from a Sense of Obligation

Some of us approach our relationship to God with an attitude of "God's word says, that's settles it, I'm going to do it." It may come as surprise to most of us to learn that doing simply what is required is viewed by God as neutral. In the parable on "Duty" (Luke 17:7-10), Jesus concluded with this statement. "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.'" Duty or "obligatory giving" then becomes the neutral or starting point for what we do. [The

Greek term for this type service is *latreia* – it simply means serving according to the letter of the law.] The obligation is clearly stated in Malachi 3:10 as “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . I will pour you out a blessing . . .” Here we see the greatness of the grace of God. Though we may be judged “unprofitable” by merely meeting our mission requirements, yet we are blessed in this obedience by being in the service of the Master and being used by Him who loves us. At this level, the general behavior is motivated by being obedient to the law.

#### **D. Giving Because We Care**

Many Christians sense a calling beyond just keeping the letter of the law. In essence the law is seen to tell us to “do no harm.” The spirit of the law is meant to take us from such a neutral position (i.e., do no harm) to helping others and improving conditions in our sphere of influence. Such a step takes us from “*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*” to “*Love you neighbor as yourself.*” As Jesus illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan it calls us to become engaged in the lives of others. It asks that we go beyond giving the tithe to giving offerings. It urges us to care. If we were talking about serving rather than giving, the Greek word used to describe such service is *diakonos* and is translated “ministry” or “minister” twice as many times as it is translated “service” or “servant.” It implies a *pro-active* involvement in the work of the Kingdom of God rather just being *reactive*. This type of involvement must come from within us because of who we are in Christ. Giving or service from such motives is deemed by Jesus as qualifying for greatness in the community of believers (Matt 20:26). One's behavior will be in agreement with the belief system he has which defines the person to the extent that as Solomon said, as one believes in his heart, so is he.

#### **E. Giving for the Love of God**

God wants the very best for us and for us to be the very best we can be in Him. The paradox of our lives as children of God is that though we are “*children of the King,*” we live in relationship with each other as *bond slaves*. Though we are seated with Christ in heavenly place and will reign with Him, yet we claim no rights in this life. Though we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Who possesses all, we recognize that all we have belongs to Him and is for use in His service. This is nothing less than the *expression of the life of Christ* in us. Living our lives as a sacrifice to God is simply giving our all to Him. It is the widow's two mites that go into the collection box of service to God. It is the pouring out the precious ointment on the Lord as an act of worship. It is putting everything under His control. Such a life finds expression in loving one another even as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. This new commandment is a step beyond loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. It is having an attitude of not just a servant but that of a slave. Giving and service from this motive of love for God and those He loves causes us to be *identified with Jesus*. In our behavior we find that we do things that are beyond what we believe and are accomplished because it is God who is at work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.